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LIFE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

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LIFE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

BY

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Discipline

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TO

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MY FRIEND EPICURUS

I ATE my first snipe of the season the other evening. My friend Epicurus was away in the country, otherwise it is our rule to mark the annual incoming of the gallinago with a little banquet, the company consisting of our two selves. It commemorates a Christmas Day, which was the beginning of a friendship which has now lasted more years than either of us care to number. Epicurus was at the time 'doing' India; my work lay at a small port off the beaten track of tourists.

At the end of one December a coasting steamer cast anchor in the roads, and the captain sent word he had a globe-trotter on board who would like to see something of the place, and as the steamer would not sail till the morning, would I put him up

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for the night? I was only too glad to play the host. A new face is always welcome in a small Indian station, and new ideas are more than welcome. Before we parted for bed at four that morning, Epicurus had agreed to break his journey for ten days in order to be my guest over Christmas.

There is no need to dwell on the mockery of an Anglo-Indian Christmas—the children's festival from which childhood is banished. Each station has a more or less regular routine, which is followed year after year. Where I was, it was the custom for the European community of five-and-twenty souls to for-gather on Christmas Eve at the house of a hospitable married couple. After dinner carols were sung, and later the bachelors went on to the club and sang old choruses—'Marching through Georgia,' 'John Peel,' 'Wrap Me up in My Old Stable Jacket,' and 'The Tavern in the Town.' Epicurus heard the last-named for the first time that night, but he has heard this old ballad sung since on so many strange occasions, and so often with death near by, that he declares that if he crosses the Great Divide to the music of

harps, the first melody to awaken his new consciousness will run :—

‘ Fare thee well, for I must leave thee,
Do not let the parting grieve thee,
And remember that the best of friends must part,
must part.

Adieu, adieu, kind friends, adieu, adieu, adieu,
I can no longer stay with you, stay with you.
I ’ll hang my harp on a weeping willow tree,
And may the world go well with thee.’

The task of providing snipe for the Christmas dinner fell to the lot of the bachelors. For one reason and another—illness, absence, marriage, etc.—I was the only bachelor in the station that year, so I was glad of another gun. It was not a good snipe country, and to be certain of a bag one had to be on the ground at the break of day, while the birds were feeding, before they became wild.

For half an hour on that Christmas morning we two lay on a bank beneath the palm-trees watching the eastern hills, outlined in the moonlight on the low sky, for the first sign of dawn. The air was chilly, and there was a strange silence on the land. A faint breath of the sea stirred among the palms. The few peasants abroad moved like shadows in

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the twilight, and like shadows the flying foxes flitted home to their mango-tree.

‘Happy, thrice happy, is the man born at the right hour,’ exclaimed Epicurus. ‘Think what you and I are missing this Christmas morning because we are out-of-date—you, the Christian, too modern ; I, the Pagan, too ancient. I have no doubt that in the cold glory of that quiet sky there are still angelic choirs, still angelic harmonies. We do not see them or hear them simply because we were born at the wrong hour. But look !’

The first tint of colour had touched the horizon ; in a few seconds the eastern sky blushed like an apple orchard in full blossom. It was a glorious day ; weather perfect, scenery beautiful, and sport first-rate. We made wonderful shots as birds came down the wind over the tops of the palms at a hundred miles an hour ; we missed with both barrels that ridiculous fraud, the painted snipe, as he flopped like an owl only twenty yards ahead of us, and settled again just round the corner. I guided Epicurus to the one little patch of ground, about twenty yards square, the only place amid hundreds

of acres of swamps where you ever flush a jack-snipe.

‘What a wonderful sense of locality a man would have if he could live on the brains of jack-snipe,’ said Epicurus.

‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘but he must shoot him first.’

Epicurus did not say much for some time afterwards, for he was very much occupied with one of these mocking will-o’-the-wisps. Six times he missed it, and each time it came back to be shot at. Finally, he left it in disgust without a feather touched, and excused his bad shooting by observing that he was certain its little brown body was charmed ; probably it harboured the soul of a widowed nightingale, and it was a pleasure for him to think he had done the poor thing no harm.

Towards evening I expressed regret that the day was done. Epicurus rebuked me. ‘No, no,’ said he ; ‘this is an undying day ; few are they in the lives of any of us, even the most fortunate. Treasure them.’ And so it is that, after all these years, the snipe is still for us a sacred bird, consecrated by those few never-to-be-forgotten happy hours.

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When Epicurus on that distant Christmas morning declared himself a Pagan, he came very near the truth. An only son, he was born to a heritage of pain ; for several years it seemed impossible he would attain manhood. His parents, who held advanced views, were careful while divesting death of dread not to allow him to regard it as the portal of a land where there was no more suffering.

He was taught that life was only granted conditioned by penalties, and that dying was failure to live. His particular task was not only to overcome pain, but to find happiness and enjoyment despite it. He has often told me that, notwithstanding frequent illnesses, few children have ever had a happier childhood. Both his father and mother delighted to strengthen his will to live by developing living interests, and by teaching him how to merge his woes in the joys of others, not only of his fellow-beings, but of all Nature. They chided him with a jest ; their rebukes were cheerful, not depressing ; and with loving care they fostered every noble germ, every spark of healthy merriment latent in his character.

He was telling me one summer afternoon that in hours of sunshine, with the songs of birds and the laughter of children in his ears, and the beauty and fragrance of flowers around him, he dwelt in an enchanted garden, a fairyland from which all the horrid details and realities of the world were banished. 'Only pain,' he added, 'brings me back from that golden region. Who was the old philosopher who declared the greatest good in life was absence of pain ?'

'Epicurus,' I answered.

'Then call me Epicurus henceforward.' The name fits him well, though it must not be thought for a moment that he poses as a modern incarnation of his great namesake. Yet for many years it has been one of his favourite maxims, uttered only in the hallowed circle of friendship : 'Be epicurean in all things.'

He maintains that life is struggle ; if a man ceases to struggle, he ceases to live ; decay begins. To maintain the struggle successfully one must renew frequently one's strength. As happiness is needful for efficient renewal it is lawful to cultivate happiness

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systematically, knowing how easily and quickly it is shattered. This cultivation should include all sensations, and be continuous day by day, despite hindrances and failures. One should strive to make the joy of living a harmony in which every act of life moves with freedom.

'Always be studying how the joy of living can be increased both for yourself and others through the actual necessities of life,' he is fond of saying; 'it would be a happier world if we were only more sensible in this respect. Let's hope the next generation will be so, for there are ample opportunities for all of us to get more out of life than we do at present without in any way poaching on our neighbours' preserves.'

Ill-health shut the door of libraries against him for many years, and even in later times for the same reason his reading has only been capricious. He has felt this handicap severely, but to compensate for it has travelled considerably, and is never weary of the empirical study of life.

One of his rules is to avoid meals circumscribed by conventional rules which only

permit commonplace conversation, and to consort as often as possible with those who are able to show life as it has not presented itself to his gaze before. Bread and cheese and beer with a crossing-sweeper is in his opinion happier hospitality than a commonplace dinner-party, where only trivial topics are discussed, seasoned by cheap scandal about persons with whom, as often as not, the speakers are not even acquainted, but are only aware of their existence through the columns of the newspapers. Now a crossing-sweeper can usually furnish first-hand knowledge of human nature, especially after a few pots of his favourite tippie, and in his own expressive speech.

A sight worth seeing in Eastern lands is the eagles gathering together where the carcass is. The quickness with which vultures, for thus the word 'eagles' should have been translated, assemble directly an animal dies puzzled naturalists for a long time, until it was discovered that the birds patrol the sky in circles. Each circle impinges on the circles of the next patrols. Once death is sighted, the tidings are carried round his own

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beat by the quick-eyed bird of carrion ; his hungry neighbours spread the news round their beats, and so on and so on, with the result that a horde of vultures quickly come swooping across a sky where but a few minutes before only one, or at most two, were to be seen.

‘Learn from the vulture,’ is another favourite maxim of Epicurus. ‘Be always circling in the heights on the watch not for new death but for new life—they are frequently identical—and keep in touch with the circling paths of others on the same quest. Thus shall your mind be well fed, and it shall be through all the years, to use the old word, vigorous as a young eagle.’





THE GREAT ADVENTURE

WE were lunching together a little while ago, and, as is our wont, challenging the faith that is in us, each compelling the other to defend his position at the point of the sword, with all the skill and fence of argument, authority, citation, and experience. The question of defining life—human life—cropped up. Epicurus quoted with approval those words of Samuel Butler:—

‘We go onwards into the future as into a dark corridor. Time walks beside us and flings back shutters as we advance, but the light thus given often dazzles and deepens the darkness in front.’

He went on to say: ‘You and I have walked a long way down that dark corridor, but there are many that stand on the threshold of it; I take it we all of us desire that the light which has dazzled us shall never

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dazzle them quite so much, and the darkness that at times has seemed to us impenetrable—utter darkness—shall never be so black for them. Yet be the gloom slight or dense, every child of Adam has to find his way through it alone. How would you define life for a child in the middle 'teens, eagerly looking forward to beginning it in real earnest? Think it over.'

I finally wrote as follows : ' Life is a day—a day of great adventure. We wake in the twilight ; the blackness of the night passes ; day slowly dawns. Our eyes, heavy with sleep, blink at the light. Radiant hues stain and gild the dome above us. There, they tell us, is Heaven, where God and His angels dwell. We discern dimly through the mists red earth, green fields, gay flowers, dark woods. This they call the World. And they spin for our pleasure stories how men have ridden boldly into the gloom of the forests and slain dragons, and have freed the fields from horrific giants ; they tell quaint tales about women who have sought and found fairies in their homes among the petals, and have been taught by them the

secret whereby the red earth may be so kindly tended that flowers never fail the little people for a dwelling-place, not even among the thorns and briars.

‘The radiance overspreads the sky; it touches earth. We count eagerly the moments until we too may go forth and find for ourselves adventures in the large world. Through the narrow lattice of childhood come the perfume of flowers and the singing of birds, and we say the world is beautiful. The light is darkened for a moment; there is a rush of fierce wings, a screech, and a fluttering of broken feathers where the hawk has struck home, and we cry the world is cruel. Something we love has been killed, and in the killing of it we first taste sorrow.

‘Higher the sun mounts the heaven, and more deeply we ponder whither our first adventure may lead us. On the far horizon is an illimitable silvery plain, like rippling sunlight. It is the sea, as it were a nymph of dimpled countenance sweetly smiling, gently whispering to us. But as we watch, the tempest bursts; the nymph is changed into a storm-riding hag; the sunny ripples are

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raging fury. We quail for an instant ; for the first time the words of those around us fall on heedless ears. Our Self speaks. Then we learn that we also are made of strong stuff. The tempest is no wilder than the storms of passion now beginning to surge within our breast. When the hawk again strikes, we think not of the dead singing-bird, but of the strong fierce life of the bird of prey. The world is beautiful, cruel, and strong ; we are creatures of the world ; its life-blood throbs through us.

‘The gate of Life is at last flung wide open, and now we are free to issue forth. By the gateway nearly always there will stand one sure friend of older years. Unhappy is the youth for whom no loving voice offers up a prayer at that moment, but thrice unhappy he for whom the prayer is uttered but who heeds it not. The words will run something after this fashion :—

“*Dieu ayde!* Let that be thy war-cry, child. Thou wilt need it before the day be done if victory shall rest with thee. The mystery of the dawn has passed, but think not that its dragons and giants have passed with it. Many

are left upon earth, unconquered monsters ravaging fair places. Their shape and form have changed, but as they now are thou shalt behold them, if thou wilt but see clearly. Join in battle instantly. Be cruel then, for they are strong as they are foul and evil. In thy strength shalt thou conquer; therefore always be strong, and test thy courage highly. The unfading beauty of the world comes to thee through conquest over the creeping, crawling things of death. Go forth, dear child; be strong, see clearly, be brave. God aid thee. Thy day of great adventure has begun.” ’

It was some little time before we met again. Reverting to this description, Epicurus observed: ‘Rather rhetorical, but I suppose I have no right to say that. Are we not, both of us, word-smiths, seeking delight in fashioning out of words and sentences small works of art, some for daily use, others for mere ornament, much as a goldsmith plays with his lump of metal? Two things about it I like; you have not flinched from the cruelty of life; it is culpable folly to allow children to grow up in the belief that cruelty in this world is abnormal, when we know it

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is one of the commonest evils man has to contend against. Also you have adopted the fairy-tale analogy; the actual people we meet when we grow up are never as real to us as were the trolls, ogres, beautiful princesses, and brave youths who were our first companions when we lost ourselves in fairyland. And may we not always dwell in that enchanted region? It needs but a wave of imagination's wand. Look round this crowded restaurant. Utter the secret spell that shall turn these men and women into the animals which in their conduct they most nearly resemble. What a queer menagerie—lions and rats, sheep and goats, obscene baboons and skipping gibbons, delicately feeding deer and scavenging swine—all here, and a score of others.

‘But were I to follow in your footsteps, and speak to a child on this subject, I should talk something after this fashion: Life is activity; right life is disciplined activity. There are only two conditions of earthly existence—the state of living and the state of dying. When activity ceases, death begins. Free your mind, my child, once and

for all, from the delusion that there is in this world a middle state—a haven under a hill—where life may pass healthily and happily in a state of calm. Such a calm is stagnation, death-breeding stagnation. They who abide there have entered the state of dying. Life's activity implies a perpetual struggle, a never-ending fight against death and decay. This is as true of the mind and soul.

‘Look at those poor creatures in London's parks—the so-called unemployables. It needs no effort of the imagination to realise that these human beings are to all intents and purposes dead. If a pestilence were to sweep them into the pit, the nation would not suffer; it would benefit. But if these loafers from this point of view are alive only in the sense that a mechanical mouse is alive so long as it is wound up, there are others equally, though not obviously, as dead as they. Persons of means who exist simply for personal pleasure are in a state of dying; so are those who work for their living when they fall into dull, unthinking routine, discharge their duties mechanically, and waste their leisure in idle pursuits.

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‘ You, my child, would be perfectly free to make your own choice, but for one fact. You do not stand alone ; you are only part of a vast living organism. The human body is composed of multitudinous cells ; if one cell becomes moribund or dead, those around it are evilly affected ; decay sets in, it becomes a centre of disease. The individual is but one of the multitudinous cells which constitute a race or a nation. When an individual ceases to be living or active, he becomes a source of danger to his race or nation. He is a new rallying-point for decay ; another barrier removed from the advance of death. And so it is no man can live his own life in his own way without affecting others for good or evil. He either diffuses activity and life, or he promotes decay and death.

‘ This truth is readily grasped by a child, for he has only to look into his own life to see how largely his happiness and well-being are dependent on others.’

I was prepared for the acceptance by Epicurus of my definition of life ; for, as a matter of fact, it was based on a letter of his

own, written to me some years ago at the time of poor Hinton's smash, which ended so quickly in his tragic death. Hinton was a friend of whom we were both very fond—a man of charming manners and exceptional natural abilities, but totally lacking in backbone. There was a taint in the blood. We did what we could to keep him going. When the smash came, Epicurus was abroad, and this old letter of his was evidently an answer to mine acquainting him with his death.

Memory often plays us false, and our most vivid recollections are frequently not the single incidents we have come to regard them, but several similar ones concentered by the process of time. It is so with my friend's parable-river. I know exactly the upland stream he refers to, but it does not issue from a mountain lake. That part of it is evidently drawn from some other scene, possibly among the Himalayas, not known to me.

'Life, as my mind pictures it,' wrote Epicurus, 'is an upland river issuing from a silent tarn that mirrors the everlasting mountains. It flows through gorges and valleys, between flowered banks, fringed with

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ferns, down fairy archways of feathery foliage, beneath mysterious cliffs. Reach succeeds to rapid, the waters now lap in lazy pools, now swirl among jagged rocks; they rush roaring through the gloom of impenetrable forest, they pause laughing in the sunlit stretches of the mountain meadow. You are familiar with that river of an Indian upland that became for me my parable of life years ago. On the horizon a mist rising above the tree-tops marks the cataract where it plunges into the abyss. Break your way through the jungle, and stand once again in memory above the waterfall. What chance has a boat to live, once caught into the screaming maelstrom of those grey, shattered waters?

‘We embark on the river, each one of us in his own boat. But we are no galley-slaves chained to the oars. They blister the hands, and the feeble one ships them; the pull upstream tires, so he drifts. Drifting downstream has this advantage at the outset: the rapids are shot quickly, while the boat moves slowly on the quiet current of the pleasant reaches where doves of jewelled plumage

flutter, and broad-winged butterflies, their beauty a gorgeous paradox of colour, flit idly by, and the antlered stag lifts up its head from the draught and gazes wonderingly at the fool.

‘Poor fool ! poor feeble fool ! so pleased with his philosophy of ease, which gives him such ample time to enjoy himself ! Why bother about toiling upstream ? he asks. The river answers him in the scream of the waterfall. The gliding current hastens on the boat. So he drifts—down to the cataract, into the abyss. And then—— ?

‘Though rowing hard against the stream raises blisters and tires the muscles, is it not worth it ? Pride comes in making the boat obey the will. Blisters break and harden ; muscles get used to labour. There are just as pleasant reaches upstream where a man can rest awhile on his oars and be happy in the gay sights and glad sounds of Nature hard at work while seeming to be at play.

‘The mad turbulence of the rapids may tempt beyond resistance the rower to yield for a moment to the wild rush of the waters, so that he may know the full strength of the

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current against which he is fighting. His boat may be broken, he himself bruised, and the struggle for some time afterwards all the harder, but the knowledge of the power of good and evil and of the balance that lies between them will not be lost to him, if he be wise and strong.

‘ On this, my river of Life, each man embarks in his own boat, be it rude coracle, or gilded skiff adorned with regal crown. But the manner and fashion of the boat make no essential difference, for all have to fight equally against the current, or else drift. Yet many a one imagines—foolishly imagines—the labour would be all the lighter had he only been given the chance of voyaging in a boat of different fashion. All worthy of life row against the current. Though the labour be hard, and often appear purposeless, yet something in the heart warns them it is not so. Nor is it joyless, for vistas of happiness are revealed which they never imagined could exist beside a stream that is broken by so many cruel, relentless rocks, and is overshadowed so often by harsh, pitiless hills.

‘ When the day—his day of great adventure

—draws to its close, and the prow cuts the still waters of the silent tarn, the rower finds rest. The abyss has no terror for him ; the scream of the cataract is unheard, for he has not drifted but fought steadily against the current of his lower nature, against the forces that make for destruction.

‘ The majesty of the everlasting mountains enfolds him ; the mystery of the starry heavens enshrouds him. God’s night is above and around. His day is over, his toil is ended. Peacefully he falls asleep.’





ARS VIVENDI

‘WHAT’S the most pathetic thing in life?’
I asked Epicurus one day.

‘The way we waste it; worse still, the way we make others waste it,’ he replied.

Our discussion ran on these lines : Civilisation has not included in its blessings the art of living ; individuals strive to acquire it, but they always have done so. Confucius, twenty-four centuries ago, brought the art in his own life to a high standard of excellence. In his old age he was able to say : ‘At fifteen my mind was spent on learning. At thirty I stood firm. At forty I was free from delusions. At fifty I understood the laws of Heaven. At sixty my ears were attentive to the truth. At seventy I could follow the promptings of my heart without straying from right conduct.’ He realised the truth that each different age has its special

tasks and pleasures, its peculiar disasters and triumphs, and that if a life be well spent it should be impossible at the end of it to declare that one age—childhood or boyhood or manhood—had yielded greater joy than another.

Confucius also asserted that one reason why there were so many failures in the art of right living was that 'noble natures live too high above their moral ordinary self, and ignoble natures do not live up to their moral ordinary self'—a saying that is as true of England in the twentieth century as it was of China five hundred years before Christ.

Civilisation, one of us urged, is mainly concerned with material prosperity. Let it be so. The justification of material prosperity lies in the conviction that thereby men are to be enabled to live larger and more joyous lives; or, to employ the Christian idea, that in time it shall be possible to mirror on earth the happiness of heaven, for which this world is a preparation. How far have we advanced towards this end?

Are we any nearer the goal than when wild in woods our woad-stained fathers ran?

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Sometimes it seems as if we had lost ground, for they, at any rate, stood nearer to Nature, and were not so fearfully amazed at their own instincts.

To-day we discover at the lowest end of the scale of prosperity that the chief source—often the only source—of joy is drunkenness. It is the single loophole of temporary escape from the whips and scorpions of a brutalising existence which is all that civilisation can offer to thousands of her children. Now the pleasures of inebriation at certain stages of the world's progress have been a direct incentive to industry. By curious irony, a desire to get drunk has been a not unimportant factor in providing cheap tea for moral breakfast tables. Indian tea is largely grown on land reclaimed from jungle. Labour at the outset was a great difficulty. Why should a jungle man harness himself to toil when he could support life in freedom? To get more joy out of life, was the answer either his reason or his instincts gave him. So for four days in the week he would labour in order that on the three others he might explore the Paradise

and the Gehenna of alcohol. One would like to shed tears over the depravity of this simple jungleman if one were not cursed by a sense of humour and the knowledge that civilisation is still content that many of her citizens shall have no nobler joy.

Now let us regard the higher end of prosperity—where riches are heaped. We agreed that the most precious possession that money can secure for a man is time. The rich man is able to buy freedom from the fetters which the hours rivet on all who have to work for a living. With his gold he can dam the hundred and one petty channels of trivial labour through which ordinary life runs to waste. But having secured this splendid boon, has he the art to use it? Some certainly have; more have not. Time is only a burden to them, and the main thought of to-day is how most easily they shall kill to-morrow.

It is not the individual's fault; he has never been taught the art of living; nor has he been inspired with a desire to learn it. In what *Vade Mecum* do we find to-day that splendid prayer of Thomas Sutton, the founder of Charterhouse School, dead now three

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hundred years : ' Lord, Thou hast given me a large and liberal estate ; give me also an heart to make use thereof ' ?

The truism that every child of man has good in him is fitly shadowed forth by the legend of the Guardian Angel. But if each man has a celestial warder of his higher nature, over each there hovers also a harpy, ready to swoop down and carry off or befoul the meats when they are spread on the tables of joy. One suspects a tragedy at the heart of every man and woman who has earnestly striven to live aright. It is sometimes open and obvious ; more often it is hidden, but it colours life, casting gloom where there should be brightness.

' In these days,' said Epicurus, ' when we are snowed under with cookery books and recipes for delicate dishes, why does not an enterprising publisher issue a series of joy-books, with recipes for happy half-hours ? The construction of ordinary happiness is as much dependent on the nicely balanced proportions of the right ingredients as the making of a Christmas pudding. Most of us go about our pleasure in such a hap-

hazard manner, for we have never been taught any better, that we are constantly surprised at the horrid indigestion that ensues after some little bout of it. We call it reaction; but joy is not a radish, there should be no reaction.

‘ I know a farm in Arcady, where one day I shall retire from the world; there, sitting in the sunshine, with the call of birds and the grunt of swine in my ears, and before my eyes a garden gay with cabbage-roses, sweet peas, and scarlet runners, and meadows bright with willow herb and purple thistles—there will I sit and indite homely guide-books to the little happinesses of life. And when my view gets too restricted, stuffing the MS. into my pocket, I will stroll up a lane between steep banks where the bee sucks and the wasp nests, past a twisted pine-tree, to the Nob, and with half of England’s loveliest county below me and no small part of heaven above me, I will expand my ideas until I make the road to joy and gladness so plain and clear that the saddest heart and the dimmest eyes must see it and pursue it.

‘ When I was a boy,’ went on my friend,

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'every one predicted with unfailing confidence I should be spoilt. For I was an only child, and my father and mother laid themselves out to make me happy. But nowadays I find myself no worse than other fellows.

'Happiness is missed so often because when it is reached we fail to recognise it, being easily deceived by the clatter of tongues, the mirage of circumstance, and the false glamour of environment. Man is worthless without happiness. But I am no resuscitated mummy who sighs for the fragrant unguents and soft wrappings of the best bed-chamber in an Egyptian pyramid directly a blizzard sears the skin or the stench of the gutter assails the nostrils.

'Toil and pain—they are tests whereby a man's strength is proved. And love is the reward and crown of strength.

"My parents' teaching on this point practically came to this: "You must be happy, for misery is a seed-plot of sin and vice, and happiness the sweet soil where virtues flourish. So you should study to create an atmosphere of joy around you by simple methods.

"Nevertheless it must not be attempted by

seeking to evade suffering either of body or mind—the coward does that; nor by cunningly filching joy or the means of joy from others—that is the work of a thief; nor by grudging pleasure to your neighbour lest your own store be diminished—it is the action of a churl; nor by reckless and ostentatious help to the less fortunate in order to win easy praise or to save your brains the trouble of thinking out a better way—that is how the fool behaves. You must be neither coward, thief, churl, nor fool, but brave, strong, and wise, seeing things as they are, and looking life squarely in the face, whether it appear in the guise of a shining messenger from heaven or as a brutal earthly bully.

“At all times you must protect your soul, the vital part of your being, behind a shield of joy, of which a firm grip must never be lost, though wounded you may be, and brought to the ground for the moment.”

“My father would declare that service to others implied the exercise of the noblest activities of a man’s life. Through their frequent use a capacity for the higher forms of joy is developed, and a new strength created

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which in time becomes an unconscious pleasure to put forth. It is a pleasure, he asserted, which does not pall, because in working for others without neglecting himself a man fulfils the law of his natural and moral being.

‘In the forest survival is to the strongest and most adaptive; but in the garden the fittest that survive under the hand of man are plants whose blossoms are of the most perfect colour or form, and trees whose fruit is of the finest size or flavour.

‘Survival among the nations will be more nearly like that of the garden than of the forest. And he would beg me to realise that self can never be detached from society, nor society from self, and that one’s best service to oneself is in the long run service to others, and a man’s duty to his own generation is always conditioned by that debt he owes to his forefathers, which has to be repaid with interest to posterity.’

Happiness is largely a matter of temperament, I urged. There exist some mortals, civilised mortals, who never attain even a reasonable height of enjoyment until they

have at least one bone to pick with Providence, and I know a man who is never so cheerful as when he is wearing a new pair of boots.

‘And because it is mainly a matter of temperament,’ retorted Epicurus, ‘parents are the best teachers of the difficult art, if only they themselves have learnt wisdom in the world’s large school, for they should know by experience the directions in which their own flesh and blood will more readily find happiness, and the weak spots in their nature where unhappiness is most likely to intrude. Moreover, training in the higher forms of joy cannot begin too young.

‘It would be instructive, if it were possible, to get a score of men and women over forty, and in totally different circumstances, each to describe their ideal happy day, and to compare them. You would probably be surprised at the similarity in so far as essentials are concerned.’

I maintained that stupidity and that kind of selfishness and want of consideration for others, which are the sour fruit of a stunted mind, are two of the commoner poisons of

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happiness. They are a frequent curse in the industrial world, destroying or checking even that measure of freedom to which all have a right, for only in liberty can a man attain to a realisation of Self.

‘So we come round to the old, old starting-point of so many philosophies—the realisation of Self,’ remarked Epicurus. He sat silent for a little while, thinking; then he said: ‘You may remember a couple of years ago tremendous snow-storms swept the country during the latter end of March, and for days England was hidden under snow-drifts as though it were midwinter. Spring appeared far distant to all outward senses. But I awoke each morning during that Arctic period to the singing of a blackbird on a frosted poplar tree outside my window. The ground might have been carpeted with flowers, and the air soft with the fragrance of spring, so cheerful was its note. Despite bitter cheerlessness and cruel search for food, the bird sang because its inward spirit gave assurance that the season for song had come. It realised its highest self notwithstanding the forbidding aspect of its environment.

* This realisation of Self is at once the aim and the perplexity of man. I imagine it depends in no small degree upon a right comprehension of the laws that govern human life in its entirety, for it can only be by living in conformity with these laws, consciously or unconsciously, that the Best and Noblest in us is realised. But Self is so strange a being that it seems as though our days on earth are all too few in which to learn its true capacity. We study it, and strive to understand it, and it flees from us; we turn our back, and ignore it, and it overmasters us. The plaything of passion and prejudice, it sways before every gust of emotion. It is the changeling of sickness and health, of adversity and prosperity. Ambition and superstition, belief and unbelief, love and hate, now beautify, now distort it. Like the chameleon, it alters its colour to match the colouring around it; like the amantis, it adapts its form to be lost amid its surroundings.

One Self rules the day, another the night. The Self that governs our action at business does not inspire our motives at home, and

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that Self which surveys the calm is different from the one which confronts the storm. And this Protean being is our inseparable companion. It has the power to exalt or degrade us. Verily life is a hall of distorting mirrors! The eye rests on the same image, now grotesquely grand, now piteously ignoble. Which of them, we ask in despair, is the reflection of our true Self? How can we realise it if we know it not?

‘And yet—and yet,’ went on Epicurus, and there was a note of sadness in his voice, ‘as the years close in, one Self emerges from that phantasmagoria which we long to call our own. It is a Self of many facets like a diamond, having the power to absorb the light and give it forth more radiantly. Not a gleam of beauty, not a ray of happiness, not a spark of noble endeavour in our little world but is refracted there. Oh! that we had known earlier that such a Self were possible.’





THE CAPTAIN OF A COHORT

A BRITISH navy went rolling down the Strand—a big, red-faced man, with yellow hair and drooping yellow moustaches, handsome in face, but with a heavy look.

‘King Canute in corduroys!’ shouted Epicurus, pointing at him.

In Cornwall one will see this type of pure-blooded Dane living cheek by jowl with the Phœnician; there are men near Land’s End who might have stood for the Tyrian traders in Leighton’s fresco at the Royal Exchange—that wonderful portrayal of cunning hagglers. Also in Cornwall there is still Spanish blood, plainly marked in its flow. Epicurus told me how, a few years ago, he went to church in a village in the English Midlands on one Sunday, and on the following Sunday attended service at an old abbey in Normandy. The choir-boys in

those two places of worship, though separated not only by miles but by centuries, must, most of them, he declared, have been members of the same family, they were so extraordinarily alike. There are men of the Jewish race, helping to-day to make England's laws, pictures, music, and literature, who would obviously wear the flowing robes of the desert with far more grace and distinction than our ridiculous clothes.

Certain facial features will persist in some families generation after generation, and we had pointed out to us only the other day a son of a king who is the living image of his royal progenitor, though it is more than two hundred years since that frail but merry man took an unconscionable long time in dying. Is it conceivable that heredity, which is stamped with such a clean-cut die upon the face and frame of humanity, is only surface deep? It must extend to the core of heart and brain.

Epicurus is a firm believer in a wise revival of the past, especially when it links a man more closely to sad hours and brave days which his own kith and kin have endured.

Talking on this point, he said: 'It has always seemed to me that by doing this we add a dignity to the dull routine of peace. It is too often forgotten not only how suddenly distress seizes on a man, but also how quickly great national crises arise. It is blind folly, ostrich-like stupidity, to assume that the heavens are never to be darkened in our days, nor our hearts to fail us for fear. The true test of right living is not death in the odour of sanctity, but readiness to so fight, to so suffer, and last of all, if need be, to so die, that whatever calamity confronts us, the noblest traditions of our race shall continue vigorous through our actions.

'This may appear so small a matter, regarded from a personal point of view, that it can well be left to chance; yet the life of a nation must hang on it one day—whether in this decade, or a century hence, who can tell? We fail in our duty, each one of us, man, woman, and child, if we do not make ourselves strong, body and soul, mind and muscle, against the day of adversity. It will come sure enough to most of us, though it may be only in the shape of a personal visita-

tion, none the less calling for strength and endurance. Peace and happiness are in truth breathing-spaces granted to nations and to individuals to prepare for the fight, and for those who regard these blessings in this light even the most ordinary drudgery becomes practical training for heroism.

‘There are times when I think of a man as the captain of a cohort,’ my friend told me ; ‘a person who has been placed over an irregular body in whose recruiting he has had no choice. He has just been put there in command, and has to take his cohort wherever chance may order. It may be he has behind him hill-blood, a wild, unruly strain, splendid in a foray, eager for the roughest adventure, willing to endure any hardship, but loathing routine, and always kicking against the pricks of convention. But he is stationed in a city of the plains, and condemned to a life of peace and pipe-clay. What happens ? The cohort is in constant rebellion ; it can only be kept in hand by the sternest discipline ; its energy is wasted ; no laurels crown its captain. Or the reverse. A cohort of the easy, comfortable type, just the sort that

delights in sentry-go, and takes a lofty pride in band and mess-plate, is ordered to do duty in some forsaken corner of the earth where night-attacks are frequent, and there is hardly a moment free from harassing surprise. Is it any wonder it is ineffectual, and no promotion comes to the commander ?

‘A commoner tragedy is when the cohort mutinies ; some are for the captain, some against him ; and now he rallies to himself the good elements and now the bad, and if at the end the latter get the mastery he goes under. The rough luck of it all is that the captain is the only one to be shot at. All of us live under the same conditions ; and some have not the time, others not the charity, to reckon the odds against which the poor wretch who fails has struggled. *Vae victis !* They have won ; he has lost ; yet theirs perhaps may be a Pyrrhic victory and his defeat a Thermopylae.

‘So the fight goes on, generation after generation. Lucky are the captains who do duty in the country to which their cohort is accustomed. Then when success comes the boastful don their shiniest helmets,

fly the gaudy banners of Personal Vanity, and their own trumpets blare, "See the conquering hero comes!" They forget the forces under their command.

'Little choice is left to a captain in the day of battle; his underlings are drawn from the remnants of his father's armies, and short is the time in which he is able to train them. He may be taught, or learn for himself some of the arts of warfare, but so few that though he carry all before him in the early hours, he yet suffers defeat ere nightfall, or it may be that in the end he plucks victory out of disaster, but is too far spent to enjoy it. It would all be of little or no account did we not know that on the morrow, in the next generation, the same fight will go on, and that we can, at least to some small extent, discipline those under our own command so that when they rally under the banner of the next captain his chances of victory will be so much the brighter.'

My friend is touched with the madness of wandering; ever and again the fever pain of Io, stung by the gadfly, takes hold of him; nothing can cure it but travel. He

must be up and away to the wild lands, to the solitudes, to unwonted scenes and smells and sounds, which give to his existence its finest flavour. Having money, he finds in the freedom it gives him the chief practical advantage of wealth. Luxury's highest pleasure is as a foil to the privations which his wanderings have so often entailed.

He rejoices when he stays in homes where life moves forward on velvet. Ancient halls, family portraits, ancestral armour, old books, with curious and sometimes pathetic inscriptions written on their faded fly-leaves, traditions, and all those other things which are the gifts of Time, and which wealth cannot buy, delight him even more, perhaps, than the comforts and conveniences which gold does place at the service of the rich. But afterwards he returns perfectly contented to his simply furnished flat, and cannot find within himself the faintest shadow of envy or the least desire to sacrifice the smallest atom of his independence for any one of those things.

As he confessed to me, he attributed this feeling at one time to a certain affectation of

contentment, until its very sincerity convinced him that it arose from something beyond himself. Now he holds that he has inherited an overdose of the blood of some of his more restless forebears, wherefore the bare simplicities of camp life befit his nature better than the substantial pleasures of a settled home. To this overdose is probably due his wandering disposition. I showed him one day a family pedigree that had come to my hand—a very human document, which seemed to furnish wonderful evidence of how once the wander-fever gets into the blood it is never bred out.

In the eighteenth century there lived a doctor at Banff for four score years and two ; he thrived and begat sons and daughters, nine of them. One went into the Navy, and sank beneath the wave fast by his native shore in the *Royal George* ; another continued in medicine, migrated to London, rose to eminence, and became a Fellow of the Royal Society. Yet another (and this the most important) wandered to India, and married in Behar in 1786. From this Behar marriage came ten children and seventy grandchildren,

and throughout the nineteenth century and after you will find it hard to lay the finger on a single province of the British Empire which this old Banff doctor's prolific descendants did not help to make. And not only in distant lands.

One of that Behar wanderer's own sons fought at Waterloo ; another helped to build one of England's chief railways ; a third rose to eminence as a teacher of great men, and passed the evening of his days in the calm of an English deanery. You will stumble over the graves of others in the cemeteries of queer, out-of-way places like Manintoddi, Roodeport, Dimboola, Kindat, Cuddapah, and Port Fairy. One who planted sugar in Mauritius wept the loss of wife and four children, their homeward-bound ship sinking in a cyclone off the Cape. But his grief healed ; he married again, and there were born to him three more children.

The British Empire has been the parish of this Banff doctor's progeny for four generations. They are born in India, Mauritius, or Natal ; they marry in Vancouver, Hong Kong, Australia, or New Zealand ; they die

anywhere. They officer the Indian army ; they govern provinces in Bengal, Madras, and Burmah ; they till the Indian jungle, and perish in the process ; and bring into cultivation the hills and swamps of Natal, and make a little money out of it. They administer Zulus and the forests of New South Wales, and build dams in the droughty backblocks of Queensland. They farm in New Zealand, and are schoolmasters in British Columbia. They fall in battle at Spion Kop ; teach the gospel at Lebombo, and heal the heathen in Formosa. They must ever wander, but from some grip at the heart rarely lose sight of the flag.

For several generations this family-tree flourished, with many branches, but now it seems as if, having reached the height of its vigour, it is decaying to extinction. The railway builder, who died not fifty years ago, had twelve children, of whom three died in infancy ; three, living to maturity, never married ; two others married, but were childless ; but the other four fathered and mothered forty children, out of whom thirty-two attained maturity. Their ages now

run from the middle twenties to the middle fifties, but of these twenty-two only twelve have married, and have had twenty-seven children, not all living, a shrinkage of thirty-five per cent. in one generation—a decrease even more remarkable when, on closely analysing the figures, it is seen that eighteen members of the present generation are represented by only six (the youngest twelve) in the coming one. Yet there is no trace of individual decay, and the tasks which these men and women have undertaken throughout the last century have still to be performed if the Empire is to survive. We hear much nowadays about dwindling families, but here is a concrete case, only too typical, one fears, of hundreds of others.

This document interested Epicurus greatly. ‘What is to be done to check this awful waste?’ he asked. ‘Here are facts about a failing family, and you know my views of the individual. In one direction only can we look for help—to the teachers of eugenics, hoping and praying that they may not have arrived too late. We want the captain to be given a better fighting chance, which can

only happen through a wiser system of recruiting the cohort, but without undue interference, for one never knows under what strange banner genius will enlist. If our national greatness is not to perish, the decay of families, who for generations have not flinched from the burden of Empire, heavy though it be, must be checked.

‘But directly thoughts turn to the fall of nations, one is confronted by that miracle of humanity, the Jewish race, who to-day in the synagogues of London chant the same hymns and utter the same prayers which echoed through the courts of the Temple of Solomon when on the first evening the setting sun made glorious its golden roof.

‘It was a small tribe for all its swelling figures that slipped out of Egypt on a low tide under cover of a sand-storm. It increased in the wilderness, notwithstanding pestilence and drought, and when it entered the Land of Promise, flowing with milk and honey, but presently to be soaked in human blood, it conquered. Its God was a jealous and a cruel God, unrelenting in the trials of His chosen people. Think of the dispersions,

the massacres, the degradations, the humiliations this race has been through, ay ! and the treacheries and mean vices of many of its members. Yet it survives. It has not been great among the nations, and though out of the furnace of its sufferings imperishable gold has flowed, it has never under its own civilisation produced giants among men of all time ; Moses, the greatest of them, was nurtured in Egypt. Yet it goes on, helping to mould and guide the activities of the younger peoples.'

'What is the explanation ?'

'Lies the secret in the promise to Father Abraham that his seed should be as the sand of the sea, a promise that still holds good ? The fecund home and the centrifugal force of big families, are they the causes of a nation's survival ? Or is it due to unquestioning faith in a One True God, and unfailing adherence to the customs, social and religious, that arise out of it—a God jealous and stern, but who never forgets His people, and who, with all eternity to work in, will not hasten the day of deliverance which shall surely come, if only the tribe

will not sell its birthright for a mess of pottage, nor neglect His commands to increase, as lesser tribes and greater nations have done? Where the Hebrew, with all his faults (how well we know them!), succeeds, why should the Anglo-Saxon, with all his virtues (so radiantly apparent!), fail?

‘’Tis a big problem. The least we can do is to support and assist those who are trying to solve it. Elders should learn the principles of eugenics, and practise them; the young should be taught them.’





OUTSIDE THE ARENA

EVERY one must have read Whyte-Melville's story, *The Gladiators*, and remember Hippias and his 'family'—the retired gladiator and his training-school for pupils in that brutal sport which stripped decency from death, and made a mockery of man's final and most majestic surrender to Time.

Every cut and thrust was practised in that school under the eye of the master, who had himself been through it all in deadly earnest, as his scars testified. Not only was the young swordsman shown how to avoid the cunningly thrown net and the clever feint of foes, old at the game and reckless, but also he was trained for combat with wild beasts, none knowing, until the trumpet sounded, whether he might not find himself pitted against claw and fang.

Tactics that conquer a fellow-man are of little use when the savaging brute is loose.

And so old Hippias trained his young men for every possible encounter, and he would himself take a hand in the rough teaching, smiting mercilessly with the wooden sword, for he knew cold steel was yet more merciless.

'Te morituri salutant!'

The young swordsmen, as they step into the arena, still hurl that old, defiant shout to the throne where brutal, sensual Life, clothed in purple, heavy with gold and wine, reclines upon its cushions, glad to reverse the thumb when the fighter falls. Those about to die cry the salute. Not all shall die; some shall win through and live to scabbard their steel in the carcass of regnant Grossness.

It is a beautiful conception that man is born into this world a soul new-washed in heaven, but it is a lamentable fact that his soul is so burdened with the sins of his fathers to the third and fourth generations that he can never escape from them throughout the whole length of his earthly journey.

Therefore it is merciful that parents, still

bleeding from the wounds of the arena to which their lack of skill or exercise has exposed them, should train their own how to avoid the same hurts, and practise them in fence and guard before they are called to the fight. They must play the part of Hippias, and as wisely and roughly as he.

‘ Parents ! ’ snorted Epicurus ; ‘ idiots who sit in the seat of authority with their pontifical robes tightly clasped round their knees, fearful lest even their clay feet shall peep through ; fools who keep up the farce until it becomes too much even for their sense of humour, when off come the robes in a hurry, and they are bundled into a corner, and the children at last behold, what they have often suspected, that their small tyrant gods are clay to the crown of their heads.

‘ And you would have these monuments of stupidity teachers of wisdom ; these cowards, who are frightened to face their own faults when they glare at them from their children, instructors in courage ; these pitiful scare-crows, decked out with the tawdry rags and feathers of vanity and self-conceit, trainers for the stern realities of life. No, my good

optimist, you must not look to the home for Hippias in this generation.

‘Begin at the beginning: first systematically train the parents (both he and she, especially she) for the highest duty they have in their power to render to nation and race. It must not be possible for a man to say, as a young fellow said to me the other day, “I never really knew the meaning of the word ignorance until I became a father.” Perish the sentimentality enshrined in the hackneyed line, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” For “rules” read “ruins,” and, as things now are, you will often come nearer the truth. The heart and brain that mould the youth rule the world.

‘Where do we find the home regarded as a profession for women, requiring as much education as any other career; or paternity and the training of children treated as quite as important a part in a man’s life as politics or sport? We have made recently some small advance towards common sense, inasmuch as that hideous old fraud, “And they married and lived happily ever after,” is now nothing but a jest. Who can be happy by the light

of Nature, least of all in marriage, which we are beginning to teach is discipline, not indulgence? You, who are a father, return humbly to your home, and, assembling your sons and daughters about you, beg them in the future to be most cautious how they accept your counsels and commands, for when they are not based upon your selfish desire to have an easy and comfortable time, they are the outcome of that vanity that would have the children reflect in some way or other glory on yourself. Oh, most sapient parents! how you do adore your children when they put a boast in your mouth.'

Epicurus is insistent that the training of the child is the parent's duty. He asked me: 'Has it ever occurred to you how far behind all other free mammals man lags in his attitude to his offspring. Among wild beasts it is the accepted duty of the mother, and in many instances of the father as well, to prepare their young for the battle of life, to train them to play a strong part in the struggle for existence. The parent-beasts seem, as it were, to realise that failure to do

Discipline

this will involve the destruction of their young, and extinction of the race.

‘But man, the tame beast of the house, has come to regard it as the alpha and omega of parental duty to find a substitute, and is thoroughly satisfied with himself so long as this substitute’s efficiency is assured by some friend who has done the same himself. I doubt the wisdom of it, especially when I remember that the men who have left the noblest mark on history have so often been the sons of mothers who devoted their lives to them. It inspires the uncomfortable feeling that, notwithstanding all our make-pretence, the laws of Nature still govern mankind, and that the wages of sin against these laws may prove to be death.’

I pointed out that civilised life is essentially artificial, and we must adapt ourselves to our environment. There is about an equal difference between an English hot-house and an Amazonian forest as there is between modern society and, say, life in an African kraal. You cannot compare the two states of existence, yet even in a barbarian village the parent has little time to devote to

the young ; how much more so in this England.

‘ You hypocrite,’ growled my friend. ‘ It is not the busy parent who as a rule fails in his duty to the children ; it is the lazy one—he who has learnt from his father before him how to dodge the burdens of life, and he who will have his children instructed in the art of doing the same. Money provides the simplest means, so the boys must be taught how to make money quickly, and the girls how to marry money quickly, and they must not be over-disciplined, for discipline is unpleasant. In the old days the brutalities of our public schools about which we read so much were good training for the rough and ready methods of life that generally prevailed whether the nation was at peace or at war, so is it not logical, in these fat days of prosperous peace, when so many of us want to have a good time without any worry about the past or the future, that public schools, if they are to hold their own in public estimation, should provide a proper training for an easy life ? It is horrid for a father to have a son return home for the

holidays, and behave for all the world as if the parental line of conduct was not good enough for the boy. The school should as nearly as possible reflect the home.'

'Flabby lumps of selfishness—is that what the nation wishes its sons and daughters to be educated down to ?'

'Perhaps not consciously,' answered Epicurus; 'but I do consider it wise to foster the uncomfortable feeling that all is not well with the present system of education. The old rough ways of toughening the moral fibre—they were not by any means always to be commended, nor yet altogether to be despised—have for the most part been abolished, but too often it appears as if no sound hardening process has been substituted. At one of our best public schools it is, I believe, still the custom for younger boys to have to turn out at 6 A.M. in order to prepare tubs for their elders. The hardening process here is obvious, and in itself excellent; but, knowing as we do the importance of sleep for clever, fast-growing youngsters, it seems a lamentably crude way of attaining it.

‘Neither civilisation, nor complexity of life, nor artificial conditions of existence can ever justify parents declining themselves to discharge those elementary duties to their young which Nature insists on lesser creatures performing if their species is not to perish from the earth. This parental training is more commonly practised in those homes of England, both among the upper and lower classes, where the feudal spirit lingers.

‘Such parents delight to educate systematically their children in the responsibilities that lie before them; they do their best to bridge the ever-gaping gulf between the generations; they do not blind their eyes to the pathetic truth that it is not natural for a child, after a certain age, to love a parent (the fifth commandment would never have been inscribed on the stone tablets were it otherwise), and they take care in the brief years of home companionship to make themselves the friends and comrades of their children, relying on these human bonds and not on the decrees of Sinai for that love and honour for which their hearts yearn.’

It almost seems, I observed, as if it were

an axiom that an unhappy childhood is needful for a man in order to achieve special distinction, so often do we find strong characters moulded by privations and sufferings in early years. Therefore to give a child a good time is to create an obstacle against its success in later life ?

Few would accept this, yet there is truth in it. Sickness, when it does not kill, is Nature's favourite method of toughening the moral fibre and strengthening the will-power ; poverty is a common means to the same end ; but where neither exists, how, in these tender-hearted days, is a parent to proceed ? There is folly in trying to play special Providence to the child, in never allowing it to bear the brunt of natural disappointments, in withholding knowledge of suffering, and in cultivating the belief that pain is punishment, whereas it is usually, especially in the earlier years, only an integral part of that struggle from which shall presently emerge clean and vigorous life.

‘ That point of view,’ exclaimed Epicurus, ‘ was brought home to me most poignantly when I was little more than a boy. As you

know, religion, in the ordinary sense of the word, did not enter largely into my childhood. My mother would take me to church as a treat, for I delighted in it. I seemed for the time being to have climbed above the world and to stand upon a lofty, sunlit peak; its thin, pure air raised me to a state of exaltation. The music, the vestments, the painted sunbeams through the stained windows, appealed to my higher emotions. I tasted a new ecstasy, and found it good.

‘At that time we used to go to London for several weeks in the year, and my mother made it a rule to work among the poor. Latterly, she often took me with her, and I am now firmly persuaded she did it intentionally as a corrective against such vain and empty emotions.

‘One winter afternoon we were visiting in one of those dreary tracts of poverty that lie on the other side of the river. It was a wretched, drizzling day, and the rawness pierced to the bone. There was a sense of misery in the air; one could feel it rather than see it. The street lamps, as they were lighted one by one, deepened the gloom. My

mother entered a tenement where I was not allowed, and she left me to pace the street. It was almost deserted, except for a few ragged children playing on the doorsteps, for it was too early for the poor souls who peopled that warren to return from work.

‘ This was my first acquaintance with utter desolation. I seemed lost among the wretched ways of men, to be wandering aimlessly in a barren land of hopeless human helplessness, of needless man-made misery. The world was kind to me, why must it be so brutishly cruel to others ? At the end of the street there was a church, unnoticed in the darkness. The lamps within were suddenly lit, and through the East Window came a flood of warm light, rendering radiant that haunt of sadness and wretchedness, with the painted pictures of that old story of mortal anguish and degradation and of the eternal triumph over them. I had studied them from a comfortable seat inside the church, and they had soothed my emotions ; but out there in that mean street they touched my soul. Remember, I was only a boy of twenty. Ever since that hour the conviction has

remained strong in me that suffering and distress are not futile ; there is a reason for them, and it may be that, if we are strong and brave through these terrible experiences, our souls shall endure, or, at least, the soul of our race.'

'Doesn't that conviction imply acquiescence in misery, provided your own life is protected against it ?' I asked.

My friend was indignant.

'Certainly not. How can that be at this stage of human progress ? Acquiescence is the outcome of ignorance, not of knowledge. The more you inspire a living interest in those sins and sorrows which are the thorns and thistles of remediable waste and misery, the sooner they will be rooted up.'





MAKING READY

ADD five to the Psalmist's allotted span of life, divide the three score and fifteen into three periods of five-and-twenty years, and, broadly speaking, for the first period a man should live for himself and through himself ; for the second, he must live partly through himself and partly through others ; and for the last period, he will live through others.

‘This was my father’s doctrine,’ said Epicurus. ‘He would tell me, so quickly does life unfold itself, so continuous at the outset are its changes and surprises, that there is grave risk of checking growth of mind and soul if a child is not encouraged to live for and through himself. The healthy child, standing beneath the tree of knowledge of good and evil which is in the midst of the garden, will always be a-tiptoe to pull down the blossoms and to snatch at the fruit that

are just beyond his reach. But there is so much clean and honest joy in the world, and so much knowledge of good and evil which it is right to give, that but little wise discretion is needed to guide the curious, growing mind aright. The most damnable word a parent can say to a child is "Hush!"

'When childhood passes into youth, and the big world appears but an appanage of the small kingdom of the flesh over which he is now sovereign lord, give him joy of his realm. His undisputed reign will be brief, but who shall say when the power then gained shall end? At this stage of civilisation human progeny is predisposed at birth to discipline. Its forefathers for many generations have endured it in some form or other, and a child rightly trained readily accepts bit and curb, provided their application does not conflict with his inherent sense of justice. The favourite work, the favourite game demands self-discipline, self-control in some degree for success to be attained. And the form of selfishness which my father advocated for children could never, he declared, if wisely watched, degenerate into

a petty vice by reason of the activities, mental and bodily, that it would of itself engender.

‘At five-and-twenty that distant bugle-call of death which men call love will have sounded imperiously. Ringing across the wide spaces of life, its tones fall golden on the ear of youth ; it does not catch then the note of menace. Yet in truth it is only sounding the first warning that death advances, life retreats. To live on, life must be merged in the lives of others.

‘During middle age a man must live more and more through others. Never waste time upon men and women over forty who are not fond of children ; they are dead. And in middle age, to look back and long for the more selfish joys of youth is to find the fate of Lot’s wife : the heart is turned to a pillar of salt. But as the years march on, the more and more a man loses his own self in others’ pleasures and pains, and the deeper he plunges his life in the lives of others, the healthier and happier he is, until at last he comes to that wonderful love, so trusting and without reserve, which the quite young lavish upon the old. This intense

sympathy between the two is an abiding beauty of vigorous old age, and one of its peculiar characteristics. Thus the wheel of man's life turns full circle.'

The body is the least part of man. It is a heritage of many generations. A man's strength, weakness, beauty, or lack of comeliness—they have been bestowed upon him by others, and he must turn them to the best uses in his power, but without boastfulness or shame, accepting them as the first conditions of life. To a less degree the same may be said of the mind, for many of its qualities have also been handed down not only by parents and grandparents, but by unknown and long-forgotten ancestors, and thus traits are inherited the source of which cannot be traced. For this reason much of the mind is peculiarly a man's own ; it differs from all others in various little ways known only to himself, and can therefore only be rightly governed by himself.

Thirdly, there is the soul. It is no heritage ; it is the man's Self, his very Self. If his soul be strong, no mortal being, no worldly power, can rob him of it ; death has no terror for it.

Whence the soul came, whither it goes, many wonder, but none can certainly say; the mystery is still left to faith, for the veil of man's Holy of Holies has never been rent in twain. But this we do know, that the finest types of humanity, no matter to what creed they have subscribed, have so strengthened and perfected their souls on earth as though they were assured there was work waiting for them to do in the hidden Eternity to which they have wended their way along the rough paths of visible Time.

In making ready for the toil of life these three elements have to be borne in mind, for each must be so trained that it can lend strong support to the other twain in times of stress. It is foolish to despise the body because it is temporal; it is as foolish to neglect the soul because its nature is unknown. The philosopher who regards the physical frame as a mere overcoat of the reason, disregards the tremendous influence it exerts over a man's thoughts and actions from birth to death.

The art of child-training is to encourage self-development on healthy lines. Nature

stands ever over and above the child, and the wise put at least as great trust in her as in their own methods. They strive to make their guidance and control conform with the ways of Nature, knowing that she works for strength and healthiness.

Granted that the map of life roughly defined above be in the main correct, it is the duty of those in whose hands lie the moulding of youth to prepare it for that state, when its own activities must be bent to the service of others. Epicurus asserts that service to others implies the exercise of the noblest activities. Through their constant use a capacity for the higher forms of joy is developed, a new strength is created which presently it becomes an unconscious pleasure to put forth. This delight does not pall, for the simple reason that in working for others without neglecting himself a man fulfils the law of his natural and moral being. This truth is ascertainable by experience. That high type of patriotism of which Japan gave the world a notable illustration during the war with Russia is a recent instance. But is not the whole history

of England, and the building up of the British Empire, an example of the enduring achievements which this form of selfish unselfishness can and does accomplish?

Elders are apt to overload children with good advice, entirely forgetting that the value of all counsel to childhood depends less on its intrinsic worth than on the manner of its interpretation. The more a child learns to seek good and avoid evil unconsciously, the better the teaching. And children are, in a sense, aware of this. Epicurus tells a story of a small girl friend of his, aged ten, to whom he gave a story-book. After formalities, she remarked, 'Is it immoral? if so I am sure I shall like it, but I do hate moral stories'—a truth, crudely expressed, which the makers of childhood's books might do well to remember.

The lifelong battle for freedom begins at a very early age. The sympathetic heart is slow to rivet fetters on the young, knowing how many and heavy are the chains which they must accustom themselves to wear. This fighting for a distinct individuality is the mainspring of many childish aberrations

which are frequently clumped together under the head of faults. Yet it were good if every child of Adam, male and female, was able to approach maturity in the confidence of an individual personality, not to be puffed up by another's praise, not to be cast down by another's blame, but able to test all actions serenely by the purpose which prompted them, and by the manner in which they were carried out, courageous in the knowledge that their life is their own, vowed to good service, and strong in the conviction that the sternest judge of any wrong-doing, slackness, or insincerity of conduct holds court within their breast, yet not to be turned aside by failure, or despondent because the high level of virtue has not always been attained. Browning expresses this truth in that noble poem, *Rabbi Ben Ezra* :—

‘ For thence—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in what it seems to fail :
What I aspire to be,
And was not, comforts me :
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i’
the scale.’

The middle duty of merging life in the lives

of others seems to-day the hardest task. Punishment for failure in this respect will fall heavily on the nation in the future, yet individuals shall not wholly escape it if long life be granted them. Epicurus maintains that, apart from economic causes, one reason why the intellectual woman has so often an objection to maternity is to be found in the fact that she has never realised how the upbringing of children exercises the highest faculties of the mind, and so far from interfering with other duties, except at the time of birth, acts as a mental stimulant and as a recreation of incalculable benefit.

This evil he believes to be in part due to the custom of withdrawing boys from the guardianship of their mothers at an early age, and also partly to the mistaken teaching that prevailed in the early stages of public-school education for girls, when the home was held up as the last refuge of the dunce and the slacker. But in recent years this attitude among public-school women has entirely changed, and for whatever profession a girl may be trained, she is now taught to regard motherhood as the noblest

profession of them all. If ever the system of public boarding-schools for boys be killed in this country, it will be by the hand of the educated mother.

Imagine the surprise of a worthy farmer who, on going to the cowhouse one morning to take away the calf from a favourite Alderney, was greeted with these remarks, uttered in a meditative tone by the old cow as she thrust her head towards him over the half-door :—

‘ You ’re a fool, master, taking away the calves from me like this. Now, this bull-calf—he ’s a beauty, though I ’m his mother as says so—you let him run with me, and see what a fine, well-mannered beast I ’ll train him into. What ’s a mother for but to bring strong young ’uns into the world, and send strong young ’uns out to the world ? I ’ve done the one, now let me do the other. Eh, master ? ’

The poor farmer, at heart a sentimentalist, flabbergasted and confounded by this unexpected eloquence, collapses on a convenient dung-heap, where he sits and stares open-mouthed at the argumentative animal. He

thinks of Balaam and of Balaam's anger, of the ass and of the angel in the way, but his kindness and his good sense quickly assert themselves, and directly the Alderney stops talking he replies :—

‘ My dear old girl, it is entirely for your own good. A calf would worry the life out of you, and you would overfeed it with that rich milk of yours.’

The cow mutters : ‘ What’s the price of butter this week ? ’

But the farmer goes on : ‘ It was all very well in the old times for a cow to have her calf running at heel, when there were no nice hedges to keep the poor little things from straying into swamps, and wolves with a taste for veal ran wild in the woods. But it’s so different nowadays. Don’t you see ? We’re civilised. I look after the calf, you look after yourself, and take life easily, and have a good, comfortable time of it. What more do you want ? Now, up you get ! ’

And he smacked the cow over the nose, and in a quarter of an hour she was mooing her heart out for yet another vanished calf.

We are civilised. And the ethics of the byre and the paddock are accepted as a matter of course by thousands of parents.

A favourite argument in defence of boarding-schools is that the mother is not fit to look after her sons; if she did not neglect them, she would spoil them and bring them up softlings. It was not so in Sparta. But it is so in England—not always, but too often. Yet the neatly trimmed hedgerows of convention are not strong enough to protect young humanity from straying into smothering swamps, and wolves still lurk around man-folds.

So is it altogether wise for the mother to hand over a child she desires to thrive, directly it is old enough to be separated from the home, to strangers, experts though they may be in imparting surface polish to the young, and in rapidly instructing them in some of the more useful tricks of life. The expert stranger is constantly changing, and, inasmuch as the teacher of this year is not the teacher of next, so does the thing taught vary. But because the system has never actually broken down, it is deemed successful,

and the extraordinary adaptiveness of childhood is overlooked.

My friend's chief complaint against the public-school system is that under it parents are encouraged to waste and neglect the valuable knowledge which heredity places at their disposal. The father, says Epicurus, who to-day poses as an example of what his son should be is an ass; more often than not he should be at pains to point out to the son how to avoid being what he himself is. Each generation should stand a step higher than the last; this can only be done by a systematic study of the child's temperament and nature, in the light of the knowledge of ancestral virtues and vices. For this reason the suggestion of the State as a foster-parent seems fatuous. It is impossible to believe that we can ever breed a resolute race of men on the incubation system.

As things are, the boarding-school is, more often than not, an absolute necessity for a boy's proper education. There can be no choice. It implies an absence from home for eight or nine months in the year, but, under certain clearly defined conditions, a

combination of parent and public-school where neither shirk their duty is to-day a not altogether inefficient education.

Eton, with the intense devotion she inspires in her sons, and the hyperbolic contempt she excites in those who have not come under her influence, may bear the brunt of the argument, though she only stands here as a type of the great boarding-school. Within her walls are at least two distinct classes—boys whose fathers, and probably grandfathers, have been there before them, and boys who have been sent there because their fathers believe they will obtain special advantages, usually of a social character, which they themselves lacked. It is the first class that gets the best a public-school can give, if the home influence be maintained, for the years that intervene between the school life of father and son are so few that the essential conditions have hardly changed at all, unless, indeed, the school has entirely lost its tone, which is a very remote danger in these days.

The man with his experience of school traditions and temptations can be of real

help to the boy if he will, and can preserve that individuality which undoubtedly develops best in the household atmosphere. Any wastage that may occur in this class arises not so much from the trained masters at school as from the untrained pastors at home.

As regards the other class, if a father deliberately sends his son to a particular school, not to be made a 'man,' but a 'gentleman,' what can you expect? The home should bear the blame for any resultant snobbery, for in the home it is nurtured and fostered. I don't refer to the small mind that occasionally issues from this great school which looks down with unconcealed sneer on all men who button their waistcoats even to the last button, but to that attitude towards life that comes from occupying in one's own estimation an imaginary pedestal. This snobbishness, most pronounced in the middle and later twenties, often wears off, though a taint may remain to the last.

Epicurus, who was never at a public-school, and who under no circumstances would have gone to Eton, for it is not the school of his

family, tells with glee this delightful story against himself.

When a young man he became very friendly with an old Etonian about his own age. This fellow certainly did not come of the old nobility, but he was a very decent sort, hospitable and kind-hearted. Talking together one evening about public-schools, he said to Epicurus : ‘ Of course I was at Eton, and I know a good many fellows do put on side simply because they have been there. I think that ’s snobbish, and I don’t like it. Now, whenever I talk to you, I always try to forget I ever was at Eton.’





THE SPEAR-HEAD

ONE day in the course of conversation Epicurus spoke of religion as the spear-head of life. It was a phrase that impressed me, the more so because I believed his views on the subject to be lax. He declared that a vital religion had always played a leading part in human progress, and that mankind had not reached a state when it is either wise or prudent to throw religion aside like a worn-out or outgrown garment. You should judge a religion, he said, by the influence it exercises on mankind's modes of thought and habits of life, and be on your guard not to take a too restricted view. Think of a world from which had been banished all beauty of sculpture, architecture, painting, and literature, which has had religion of one kind or another for its inspiration. Art for art's sake is a poor thing in comparison with art for religion's sake.

The question dropped. Two or three years later the problem of religious instruction for children presented itself to me, and during our correspondence at that period the subject was frequently referred to. For the sake of convenience I have set down the following extracts from my friend's letters as though they were a single essay.

Towards the end of the first century of the Christian era, a restatement of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth was written, which is known to-day as the Gospel according to St. John. The author of this book prefaced the narrative with the inspired words : ' In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.'

The spoken word is but a symbol of the will, or will-power, dwelling within a being. In the beginning God said, ' Let there be light, and there was light.' The word expressed the will of the Creator, and the word

would have been blown away by a barren wind had not the will-power of Omnipotence quickened it.

At this stage of the world, intellectual and sympathetic paganism, substituting 'will-power' for 'Word,' is ready to accept the passage quoted above as a not undue description of the miraculous power and influence which have been exercised on the human race by the brief life of the carpenter's son of Nazareth.

Christianity is a young religion; at its most extreme limit it has only worked through sixty generations of men. It has operated on but a small section of the human family, and the section which has benefited the most by it was as grossly ignorant and brutal at the time of the Crucifixion as any barbarian tribe now upon earth. Regard the result, judged by our own national life. Is it conceivable that the British Empire could have been built up by worshippers of Thor and Odin? Should we enjoy the fruits of our present civilisation had we welded to that worship the old Druidical mysteries of oaks and monoliths? How is it that the Christian

has outstripped in so many ways his elder brethren of the world, the Jew, the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Confucian? Their faith is not less beautiful than his, their daily practices are often superior. But Christian progress has moved with such extraordinary rapidity that to-day, despite its many failures and defects, it is able to bestow upon older civilisations blessings which they had often dreamed of, but never hoped to enjoy.

Christianity, in a state of vital activity, is not a thing of shreds and patches—bits of dogma that please the mind, scraps of doctrine that titillate the emotions, loosely strung together. Nor is it the regular observance in correct attitude and raiment of certain ceremonies on certain days of the week. These things both help and hinder. A Christianity that is of practical value or benefit to the individual and the community is inspired by will-power of the same nature and character as the Will-power that was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

In regarding Christianity, in so far as it affects your own manner of living, never

lose sight of the commonplace that He whom the faithful adore as the Son of God was upon earth a Jew dwelling under an alien government, which it was the ambition of his race to throw off. He accepted the conditions of both national and religious life under which He was born. He was a peaceable subject and a good Jew, who took pains to acquire an excellent knowledge of the Scriptures, and was often in the synagogue. He only ceased to be a Jew, and became, as it were, the first Christian, when He grew rebellious against those who would use the dead husks of religion as food for the starving souls of their less fortunate fellow-creatures.

The will-power of Jesus worked for happiness on earth and for an equal chance of joy for every one, though it never flinched the burden of sorrow or the risk of pain. He was on the side of women, children, sufferers, fallen, and distressed; He was against injustice, hypocrisy, materialism, and insincerity. And the centuries which have intervened since He lived on earth have proved that will-power so directed, Christian will-

power, as one may call it, exercises such a potent and enduring force in the advancement of mankind that it may be said truly that this will-power is with God, that it is God.

Is it necessary to go on to say that this Christian will-power has not by any means always been exercised by Christianity? The history of Christendom gives many instances in many lands where for comparatively long periods of time it has been dormant, and the Pharisaical spirit dominant which regards religion as a class prerogative and a bulwark of material happiness against the encroachment of the less fortunate, and uses it as a chain to tether the souls of the poor and lowly more securely to their misery. This Pharisaical spirit is not dead yet. No, not in England. You will find evidence of it in many places, but don't be deluded into thinking it is Christianity; and should you by chance meet it in church or chapel, don't waste your breath crying, 'Woe unto you, priests and pew-holders, hypocrites!'

Be not a hypocrite yourself. You have been born in a Christian civilisation; you have been brought up under a system of

Christian education ; you have been given access to the doctrines of the Christian faith, wherefore, by whatever name you may label yourself in after life, the heart and marrow of you must remain Christian, if you choose to exercise your natural will-power—a birth-right which you share in common with humanity. All this I recognise fully, even when I talk of myself as a pagan.

Will-power can, of course, be directed solely towards private and material ends, and, if circumstances be favourable, and it be combined with intellect, it will meet with a measure of success. But by the very nature of its uses it dies, often even before the brief span of life is run out. The Jews recognised the truth of this at an early stage of their marvellous struggle for racial existence. It is the key-note of much of their writings, notably of many of the Psalms. Mattathias, the father of Judas Maccabæus, gave fine expression to it in his dying speech : ‘ Fear not the words of a sinful man ; to-day he shall be lifted up and to-morrow he shall not be found because he is returned into his dust, and his thought is come to nothing.’

A great miracle is the power which the soul of a strong unselfish man exerts over the souls of his fellow-men, not only in his own time, but from generation to generation. The operation of this undisputed energy is still hidden; its mechanism, so to speak, unrevealed. Theories are advanced, and some day, perchance, the scales will fall from our eyes and we shall behold the invisible bonds, stronger than the finest steel, and the infinite rays of light brighter than the sun at noonday, which each one of us, if he so wills it, can cast around weak hearts, and across paths darkened by sorrow and ignorance. This is the undying will-power latent in all of us.

You will be asked by children that old, old question about free-will, 'Am I a free agent?'

An argument that at one time appealed to me was put forward by a friend in the form of a simple allegory. 'I have,' he would say, 'to arrive at my office, which is four miles away from my home, at an early hour every morning. Not being rich, I am compelled to take the quickest public form of transport. This is a Tube railway which

carries me for more than three-quarters of the way. My house is about a quarter of a mile from the railway at one end, and the office about half a mile distant at the other. Now, am I a free agent in accomplishing this daily journey? Certainly not for the greater part of it, and at either end of the railway my route is more or less fixed. But I can on my way to the station walk either in the sun or in the shade. I can alter my direction to a slight degree, so that I either pass or avoid a certain crossing-sweeper, and at the office end I can either walk or take a cab; thus I am free to this very small extent. But small though it be, it is sufficient to make a difference to me throughout the day, and not only to me but to at least two of my fellow-men, the cabman and the crossing-sweeper, to whom I usually give a copper when I pass.' This, my friend would assert, was practically the extreme extent of free-will in life—so slight as to be negligible most of the time, but sufficient, if it be exercised, to alter the trend of one's own life and to affect the lives of others.

Personally I now believe that the question

whether human free-will does or does not exist is a purely academic one in so far as ordinary life is concerned, so long as there is that appearance of free-will which compels a man to disturb his mind and to agitate his soul. It is through this troubling of the waters that the healing comes.

We are not cattle, driven from the field to the market, and from the market to the slaughter-house, for which, whenever they break away at the cross-roads, there is always the drover's dog or the drover to head them back. The road is open to man so far as his physical senses are concerned. If he take this way, and not the other, which the rest of the herd pursue, he can follow it to the end. There is no obvious compulsion to turn him. So the feeling that we have within ourselves the right to make our own choice, to follow our own road, if the will be present, is the one essential thing, since such a conviction should force us to exert the power. And we need neither books nor lectures to point out the difference between the man who exercises his will-power and the man who neglects it.

For a religion there must be a God ; for a lively religion, a living God. How, then, will you build up within the heart of a child faith in Eternal Godhead ? Children are so clear-eyed, so pitilessly logical, that it is small wonder if many attempts end in failure. You talk to them of a God of mercy, justice, and loving-kindness, in whom you assert your belief, and many times a day your actions and speech cast ridicule on your teaching.

The higher your code of ethics, the lighter the heavy task. And it is prudent to make it perfectly plain from the very outset that conduct and character are the supreme test of religion.

For doctrines there must be dogmas. But be not dogmatic when you endeavour to body forth the soul of the Eternal. For know this : if all the wisdom of the ages were stored within your breast, if all the experience of the centuries were garnered in your brain, and the vast wealth of knowledge that mankind has gained with weariness and suffering lay within your reach, and you sat down to instruct your fellow-men, even

as the words fell from your mouth or pen the meaning of them would change, for every moment new knowledge is won, experience reforms itself, and wisdom assumes an altered shape.

Only the other day there came into my hand a tiny volume of Dr. Watts's divine and moral songs, price twopence, and in the margin were written initials and dates, telling when a mother taught and when each of her children learnt the verses seventy years and more ago. This is what a little boy of five was actually taught at his mother's knee in the year Queen Victoria ascended the throne :—

‘ There is beyond the sky
A heaven of joy and love,
And holy children when they die
Go to that world above.

‘ There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire and chains.

‘ Can such a wretch as I
Escape this cursed end?
And may I hope whene’er I die,
I shall to heaven ascend?

‘ Then will I read and pray
While I have life and breath ;
Lest I should be cut off to-day,
And sent t’ eternal death.’

Cheerful, isn’t it ? You may smile, but are you certain you are building on surer foundations than that fond parent thought she was doing two generations ago ? When young friends ask me if I believe in the devil, I can only answer that the worst trick of the devil is this : assure yourself positively he does not exist, and before you know it he is alive and active within you.

I am a lonely man, the better part of whose life is spent in solitude, and you may think it presumptuous for me to instruct you, a parent. But this shall be the last word I will write on the subject.

Be cautious, most cautious, how you endue the Eternal with finite qualities, kindly or cruel. Be mystical in your language ; and guide the child to search his own heart for the answers to his questions. For remember that your edifice, whatever it may be, will have to stand that test which youth in its pride of strength applies to everything.

Think of that hour, and be assured that if the God that you have built up is largely the handiwork of man, containing pure gold, but fashioned in mortal form and held in place with human clay, when it is tried, it will tumble to pieces, and the gold be lost, the truth be hidden in the wreck of it.

Then this sad thing happens. In the very hour when faith in Eternal Godhead is needed sorely, youth turns from the ruin in scepticism and contempt. Perhaps he never looks on it again, or perchance years afterwards he comes back to it, but only when the dust has been laid by tears and the rubble searched in pain and sorrow will the gold shine forth, and that truth be revealed which you so earnestly desired should abide always in his heart. And the fault will not be his ; it will be yours.





HARDENING THE MUSCLES

THE world always will be for man as man makes it. Modern civilisation has granted at least this blessing : that never before has the individual enjoyed so great freedom to make life as he wills. This liberty is constantly extending, nor can one see any reason why it should not continue to grow, unless we be overwhelmed by a lower civilisation. How can that be, if we use our freedom to increase our strength ?

But sometimes it seems as if the desert of talk were invading the tillage of achievement. Word-storms sweep across the country only to leave in their track needless dirt and disorder : the people love to be fooled by the mirage of Saharas of speech. They set a higher value on the promise than on the fulfilment, and appear to grow more and more enamoured of sitting in arm-chairs and

interminably discussing problems which may be solved by walking. But walking is too great an effort.

Is the fatal paralysis of ease and comfort creeping over us? Are we weaker than our fathers? Have we lost the desire to be strong and courageous, crying to our high priests to assure us there is peace when there is no peace—peace from human adversaries, and peace from enemies that assault and hurt the soul?

There are those who would have us believe that pain, physical pain, is senseless torment, even more purposeless than the torture of the rack. And medical science has of late years done so much to relieve and alleviate it, that it is not mere foolish dreaming to regard it possible that, if things go on as now, pain may be abolished. If pain be abolished, will things go on as now?

Doctors are themselves perplexed whether they are the best friends or the worst foes of mankind. Are they nursing into existence a people too feeble to resist sudden recrudescences of diseases which are thought wrongly to have been overcome, a people

which, even if robuster humanity spares it, will vanish before some cataclysm of nature simply because it has ceased to possess the power to live under natural conditions? There is cause for fear lest modern existence be assuming too closely the artificial conditions of a hot-house. The plants that grow there may be beautiful to look upon and of heavily perfumed odours, and the homely old-fashioned flowers that blossom in the rude airs without wither and die within, so that their cultivation is laughed at. But if the hot-house be broken, and the artificial conditions impossible even for a few hours, we know what happens.

When the bubonic plague reappeared in India, now nearly twenty years ago, and its victims who are to-day reckoned in millions could only be counted by hundreds, I predicted with confidence to a Brahmin that modern medical and sanitary science would stamp it out in three years, or five at the outside. He smiled politely, and replied seventy years was the shortest period he could give in which the country would be rid of it. This practically meant that in

his opinion it would rage until it died from lack of fuel, those who survived having become by that time plague-proof. It is possible the Brahmin's prophecy may yet be verified.

Epicurus, than whom no man's life has been more disfigured by pain, will yet speak no evil of it. Indeed he declares that if he had not in his childhood been toughened by this rough process he would have ceased to live years ago, and have missed most of the gladness of earth. In his worst hours he would find faint relief in forcing himself to believe that his sufferings were only normal, and in this way drug his mind into a grudging acquiescence in the pain. And when the worst was over, he would in imagination summon a visitant from another planet, with a body—tissue and nervous system—like to his own, only there was no waste, no renewal, the flesh as enduring as marble. And he would wave his hand and change this endurable body into human fabric, and watch the poor wretch writhe and shriek in agony when the ordinary waste and wear began of which man takes no heed.

The endurance of pain has been a supreme test of a noble nature throughout the ages. By indomitable courage man has taught his fellow-men the strength and the worth of the cause in which the body has perished. Martyrdom has always won great victories. But Blandina, the Christian slave-girl of Lyons, whose serenity under hideous torments won immortality for her name, has had her counterpart among women of our own blood, who have perished as terribly and serenely for their country, and in death given new life to the Empire whose daughters they were.

The abominable cruelties of the East are calculated to render courage ridiculous and degrading, to destroy any spark of sympathy with the sufferer, and to make the captives of an alien creed or race mere objects of disgust and contempt. But even those cruelties fail, and the unconquerable soul will shine triumphant through the befouled and bleeding tatters of mortality.

Always in the East there is callousness of life: but that is a different thing. This instance was told me by a doctor. During

an Indian frontier war there had been heavy fighting round an outlying cantonment, and the hospital was nearly full with our men. Later in the day the doctor found on the battle-ground a badly riddled Pathan, whose life he thought he could save, so he ordered his Sikh orderly to have him taken to the hospital. Now, a Sikh is a Hindu, and a Pathan a Mohammedan; more than this, between the two races there is the antipathy that lies between fire and water. When the doctor returned to the hospital, and asked for the Pathan, no one knew anything about him. So he sent for the orderly, and received this explanation :—

‘ Sahib, when we came to the hospital it was full, and the man was crying out, and nearly dead, so we put him into the incinerator.’

The incinerator was a white-hot furnace, where all the refuse, etc., was destroyed. There was a peculiar reason for this immolation, which in itself was less cruel than it sounds, for death must have been instantaneous. But it is the generally accepted belief in those parts that to burn the body

100 LIFE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

of a Mohammedan is to destroy for him all hopes of Paradise.

Combined with this callousness, there is that fanatical bravery which looks on death as the portal of Paradise, and seeks it unflinchingly. Many of the older generation will have remembered reading now and again of Moplah riots—outbreaks of fanaticism among the half-Arab Mohammedan population of South Malabar. On one occasion an old man of seventy, with his grandson, a boy of sixteen, terrorised the countryside for days. At last a squad of Highlanders was sent out against them, and this old man and his grandson, armed with heavy cutting knives, charged twenty-five Highlanders, prepared to receive them with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets. They were shot down regretfully: there was nothing else to be done. Even this fanaticism is preferable to that opposite state of mind which shrinks timorously from the slightest contact with pain.

That man must be accounted a failure who is not prepared to meet calmly the worst evil life can bring forth. We ought

of our own accord to endeavour in hours of rest and quietness to so harden our muscles that neither prosperity nor adversity can throw on us a load beyond our strength. We may deaden the acutest physical pain with opiates; we may sleep through the severest bodily operation with the aid of chloroform; but where shall we find an anæsthetic for the agonised heart when, for instance, that better part of us, that essence of our being, the energy and mainspring of our later years, that beloved form, a darling child, lies upon the bed waxen and still—so still minute after minute, hour after hour, for ever and ever, and neither religion nor philosophy can stay one pang or check a single throe of all the intolerable suffering? It remains true that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death, and so long as that enemy exists we must be prepared for his havoc. If we be too weak to bear pain of body, how shall we endure through anguish of heart?

Epicurus and I have often discussed this subject—the difficulty which undoubtedly exists under modern ideas and conditions

of maintaining personal and national hardihood. We have on one side the fortunate running away from their responsibilities; and on the other, the less fortunate demanding the State to increase their fortune, yet offering nothing in return.

‘Take the question of unemployment, about which we hear so much,’ he said once to me. ‘Undoubtedly it is a crime. Formerly the individual was deemed the criminal. Next time you motor through the charming old Sussex town of Midhurst, stop your car just beyond the mill, and you will find a notice-board on the blind end of a cottage saying exactly what our forefathers thought about it. Nowadays, the community is regarded as the criminal, which is more sane, for in our present state of civilisation it certainly is a crime on the part of society that a man who is able and anxious to work should not be allowed to do so. But if a man won’t work when there is work ready to his hand, surely the old idea should prevail, and such an individual be treated as an offender. There is necessity to be on our guard against weakening the moral

fibre of the nation by most right efforts to make the struggle of life easier. Should not all national endeavour to shorten hours and improve wages contemplate compulsory military service ?

‘ I am convinced that the first statesman who dares to bring in a scheme for compulsory and universal military service would find the country at his back after the clamour had died down that greets all attempts “to solve a problem by walking,” as you phrase it. Every healthy man likes to feel he is taking a responsible part in the life of the nation ; only nothing gets more on the nerves of any of us than the thought that our sense of duty, loyalty, and industry are being exploited by the disloyal, the avaricious, and the slacker, in order that they may either shirk their share, or make money out of our self-sacrifice. Compulsory military service, to be popular, must be general, and all classes put on an equal footing.

‘ The art of living has now more than ever to be regarded as a social art. He who tries to live for himself alone, though it may be with a sense of nice discrimination, fails.

While claiming the right to do this, such a one is quick to resent others exercising the same right directly their actions intercept his own. Social service should not be a question of odd moments. The highest service a man can give should be that which he regularly renders at home and at office, in barracks and Courts, or wherever else his lot be cast. There he has the opportunity of breaking down irritating caste distinctions, and of strengthening both himself and those among whom he works. A distinguished General once told me that the essential difference between a good regiment and a rotten regiment on active service lies in the relationship between officers and men. It is certainly so in the industrial world.

‘ But over and above this there is the duty we owe to our country. “ Here and here did England help me ; how can I help England—say ? ” It is so obvious, so trite, that words are a waste of breath.’

I wish they were so, Epicurus, but to me they seem to serve as a convenient cloak for the conscience. The man who discusses freely at his dinner-table the question of

military service or the Poor Laws feels he has done his duty nobly, and the country has no further claim on him personally for any act or deed.

It is iniquitous that a man should be expected to support a wife and a family in a city on eighteen shillings or a pound a week. If that in truth is all the community is able to pay, and the work must be done, then, in the name of practical sense, let every year a necessary number of children be unsexed, and a population of workers called into existence who, freed from the nobler affections and responsibilities of humanity, can devote their whole life to labour for the only pittance the community can afford.

As things are, the injustice goes on year after year until the climax comes. A strike occurs, and what was impossible becomes possible, but only after needless waste of well-being and life, simply because words have come to be regarded as the only thing that really signifies in the long run. Talk, write, deliver speeches, make sermons, but for God's sake do nothing until you are

compelled to, for it implies effort and exertion of mind and body, and effort is so tiring for feeble constitutions.

Is it any wonder that able, energetic men, with an intimate knowledge of these injustices, should seize on them as weapons to use for their own ends. Society puts a sheathed sword in the hand of the Syndicalist, and then cries out because he has the vigour to draw it.

‘What can be thought,’ observed Epicurus, ‘of a civilisation which permits that traffic in comely flesh and blood, that sign of barbarism, to be carried on with impunity in its midst, although it possesses all the machinery necessary to stop it, if only it had the strength of will to use it?’

‘We can only hope that the next generation will be less futile than the present one, more given to deeds than to words, not content to let old evils and barbarities continue because strength and courage are necessary in order to deal effectively with them. And we must all work towards this end privately and publicly.

‘At the same time, neither you nor any

one else will convince me that the day of our decline has dawned. The very fact that we are alarmed by signs and portents, and sincerely try to read them aright, and in the light of new knowledge to mend our ways, is a good omen.

‘Those who live in cities all the year round, and are half-amazed when a chance journey into the country reveals the young wheat greening the brown earth, or the fields white unto harvest, often seem to me to be inclined to argue from a too narrow point of view.’





VIRTUE OF REBELLION

EPICURUS had been paying visits in the country, which is always a happy experience with him. Nothing delights him more than the stone tablets of English history, those memorials of other days which are to be found in castle, manor house, and village church. It is horrible to think that traffic in those old stones is possible. They have become so much part of our national being that they cannot be torn away without injury to many tissues.

Hidden among the glades of a forest, he stumbled on an exquisite roofless building, cruciform in shape, with texts carved around the outer walls, which are still plainly pock-marked by bullets that flew during the Great Rebellion. A rough story of insurgent life did these walls tell. Softer, but not less strong in influence, are those Norman castles

which have been tamed, so far as they are tamable, to modern conditions.

Nine hundred years before sail was set on the Spanish ships that were to discover a new continent for the Anglo-Saxon race, the keels of the Saxon king Ida were beached beneath the black rock of Bamburgh on the Northumberland coast. Bamburgh Castle still sits above the sea, its keep a muniment tower of the dead life of Northumbria. The distance from its great gate on the south to Edmund's Well, beyond the northern postern, is five hundred yards. The Scottish border lies less than twenty miles away. Many a foray must have issued and returned through that postern. The keep, on its nearest turret a gibbet, scowls down on it. That supplication of the Psalmist—'O let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners come before Thee; according to the greatness of Thy Power preserve Thou those appointed to die'—must have found an echo in the heart of many a captive toiling through the outer ward up the steep steps hollowed out of the living rock, while the ghastly fruit of the gallows-tree danced

in the wind high above his head. This keep was finished, exactly as it outwardly stands to-day, in the reign of Henry II., six years before the murder of Becket.

Landward, the crag of basalt on which the castle is built rises abruptly for nearly a hundred feet before the walls leap up. So cunningly have the foundations been laid, it is hard to tell where living rock ends and masonry begins. Stone of a faint pink tinge has been used in many of the outer walls, softening as far as possible the savage sternness of the castle. Seen from the hills above Alnwick, Bamburgh Castle rises like a royal city, walled and crowned with towers, against the northern horizon. In the evening light its warm hues awaken a memory of Delhi's rose-red citadel; but it is only a faint memory, for in its stern grandeur and lonely mightiness the castle is the living embodiment of the wild history of the northern marches.

A woman founded Bamburgh, and women have woven the romance of rebellion round its walls. When William Rufus was king, Robert de Mowbray, Earl of North-

umberland, and his bride, Countess Matilda de Aquila, defied their sovereign lord, who closely invested the castle. Robert escaped by sea southwards to bring help to the garrison, but the Countess Matilda kept the army at bay, until her husband was led captive before the castle walls with a halter round his neck. He was to be hanged if the gates were not thrown open, so love surrendered where death had striven vainly.

Though often besieged, but once again was the castle to fall. Sir Ralph Grey, with unwavering fidelity, held it for Margaret of Anjou when the cause of the Lancastrians was broken. With a garrison of three hundred men he defied an army of ten thousand camped about it, under the command of Warwick the King-maker. Great cannon battered the walls, and their marks can still be seen; but not until starvation had entered did the castle fall. Sir Ralph was led prisoner to Doncaster, and beheaded there. In those days, when a man vowed his life to a cause, it was not empty bombast mouthed to flatter power, but an oath spoken by a steadfast man often only to be

washed away in a red fountain spouting from a headless trunk.

To-day the only summer flowers that blossom within the castle are red Lancastrian roses. Bushes of them grow beside the broken pillars of St. Oswald's chapel that rise from the smooth lawn of the inner ward. Many a heart-broken man and woman—rebels every one of them—must have rested a weary head against those grey stones ; and from that crumbling chancel prayers must often have ascended for victory which never came.

Let me end the story of Bamburgh. A dozen years ago the last great captain of men entered its walls. His army, twenty thousand strong, was encamped on the Tyneside ; they wielded hammers, not swords, for his victories were the victories of peace. At Cragside he had overcome Nature, clothing the bare hills with the verdure of the pine, and painting the bleak glen in the glorious colours of rhododendron and azalea. Across the moors, through Alnwick, Armstrong of Newcastle marched to Bamburgh, and began its restoration. There is a well one hundred and

thirty feet deep within the keep. A Saxon chronicler wrote of it a thousand years ago as one of the wonders of human labour and ingenuity. That well holds to-day one of the wonders of human labour and ingenuity in the nineteenth century—an Armstrong hydraulic pump, which works the lift within the keep.

This castle is now a country house, perfectly appointed, lit by electricity. In the top of the Norman keep, within the thickness of its twelve-foot wall, lighted by a glazed loophole, there is a bathroom, with hot and cold water, fitted up just as though it were in the most modern London mansion. From this bath-tub you may survey Bamberghshire, 'the finest coonty in a' England,' as the old saying goes.

Here, stripped of the trappings of civilisation, naked as Adam or the dying Seneca, you may in imagination behold again tribes of painted Britons, cohorts of conquering Cæsars, tumult of Vikings, slaughter by Danes and Normans, princes of Wales prisoners of war, marches and counter-marches of English and Scottish hosts.

Upon these scenes the black rock of Bamburg has looked down. As the vision fades, there ascends to your ears, from a wheat-field a mile away and six-and-sixty yards below you, the rattle of an American reaping-machine. So is the present ever linked with the past.

Epicurus maintains that all old castles and manor houses are inhabited by ghosts, for it is a vulgar conception that a ghost only exists when it materialises sufficiently to be visible. The higher forms of spiritual persistence reach a man's consciousness through the brain without any intermediary of eye or ear, and one may dwell in an old house peopled by ghosts, and be made pleasantly aware of their presence by the very trend of one's thoughts and imaginings, and yet see nothing. The secret of communication, he is wont to declare, lies in the education of the brain, and especially in the development of sympathy with the wilder and more rebellious side of human nature.

Every honest man is, and always has been, at heart a rebel. Though each generation does its best to crush this spirit out of youth,

it is as well for the British Empire that success so far has been very partial. Rebellion has conquered the earth, enriched history with romance, given a stern pathos to many a landscape, and is daily painting in vivid colours human lives that would otherwise be of a grey sameness.

Conventions are the walls with which society fortifies its strongholds, but they are all the while crumbling away and smothering the natural life that would grow beneath them and upon them. Sooner or later, Nature wins. The seed lodged in a crevice grows into a tree and rends asunder the solid masonry. Stones and mortar roll down the glacis and smear out with an ugly stain the colour and life of the turf. But the grass grows again quickly, and the rubble is hidden under the greenery of new leaf. Conventions perish ; new ones have to be constructed.

Do they get the best out of life who are content to follow the level road, hedged on one side by the Ten Commandments, and on the other by the balance at their bankers ? It is a good highway for comfort and respect, but so narrow that there is not room on it

for all. A mistake those make who travel this way is in believing that here, and here alone, the flowers of virtue flourish; whereas, in truth, among the thorns and in the wilderness the choicest blossoms are to be found.

But if rebellion is so good a thing, are we to teach it in our homes? I asked.

'It needs no teaching,' he answered; 'it is there. Don't crush it out, but direct it wisely, and train the young rebels how to be most effective, not forgetting to let them learn that defeat entails unpleasant consequences. The healthy child is constantly revolting by act and word against the conventions and the commonplace rules of the house. Not being a parent, I am usually the child's ally, for I have found that if you take the trouble to get at the back of his mind there is often right on his side, so far as he can judge circumstances. If he be wrong, it is for his elders to supply the deficiency of knowledge. Never think that by muzzling the mouth of a child you can chain up his mind. Stupidity in this respect makes of parents foes just when they should be friends. The more

openly children think, the easier to give guidance. Their very loyalty at times moves them to rebellion against accepted ideas.

‘ You remember that delightful story of the little daughter of our planter friend. They were talking in his bungalow about a young fellow just out from England, and were praising his good looks. One said : “ He has one of those pink-and-white complexions which we all admire so much.” And the child, suspecting in this remark some slight on her father’s weather-beaten countenance, whispered to him, “ I don’t admire pink-and-white complexions ; I like red-and-blue complexions, like yours, daddy ! ”

‘ A tame acquiescence in life as it is is a symptom of the feeble mind. Allow children to test for themselves the small domestic defences which society erects in the house against the individual. They will learn that there is sometimes reason, sometimes selfishness behind them ; that none of them are adamant, and that they will disappear if they prove no longer serviceable. Thus do you train them for the great rebellion against outworn conventions in which they must

Contentment

take part later on if they are to lead active and manly lives.

‘And one bit of practical common sense will have been fixed in their minds—that a convention is not bad merely because it is a convention. They will be prudent to examine the ramparts behind which society sits secure before rushing to the attack, and will not waste their energy against walls which, even if they were destroyed, they themselves would be the first to rebuild directly they reached the farther side. It is the duty of society to construct conventions; and it is the duty of the individual to attack them, otherwise we can never tell whether they are a real defence in time of trouble or merely Chinese bogeys and painted cardboard; or, again, whether they have only been erected as a protection for privileged selfishness.

‘You may laud rebellion as you will,’ continued Epicurus, ‘and depict its romance in the brightest colours, but the lamentable truth will not be hid that man has a genius for slavery. Strike off one set of fetters, and of his own accord he rivets on others.

He delights in manacles, and glories if his own particular irons be of a newer pattern than his neighbour's, or give forth when shaken a clink in a different key. Slaves ! we have always been slaves. To-day most of us live in the bondage of words. We sacrifice our freedom to terminology of our own forging, and allow ourselves to be whipped hither and thither by the flick of phrases, without any thought whether they be informed by sincerity and truth. Yet words—even the most beautiful—live only through those qualities which impart to them that mysterious power of giving forth a subtle fragrance which perfumes the life of hearer or reader. Why this divine gift should be bestowed on the few and withheld from the many is one of God's secrets.'

I suggested it was partly due to some special genius for sympathy, enabling a man to transmute his own emotions into feelings common to humanity. At any rate, it is necessary to have a mind rightly attuned if the words are to burn within us.

'That is so,' answered Epicurus, 'and for lack of right attunement we may go through

life deaf and blind to some of the most obvious beauties in our path. You know those words—"the peace of God which passeth all understanding." It was a phrase that in boyhood was for me the signal of escape from the mephitic atmosphere of badly ventilated churches; it meant little beyond that, and it lent itself easily to flippancy.

'Years afterwards I was on board a steamer, voyaging a southern ocean. Late one night I found myself alone on deck; we had crossed the Line a day or two before. The wake of the steamer lay white behind me, with a pale glitter of phosphorescence, just for a hundred yards or so before it was lost in the darkness of the quiet sea. It would have been a pitch-black night but for the myriad stars that studded the cloudless sky. Leaning over the taffrail, there came of a sudden to me that sense of absolute solitude which sometimes falls on a man even in crowded thoroughfares, that feeling that for a fraction of a second he has grasped the full reality of his single life—all its littleness and limitations, all its potentialities and

immensity — and from the immeasurable heights of the starry heaven, from the wide plains of the silent ocean, there surged into my soul a new emotion, a fierce rebellion against life as I knew it, a wild craving for the larger life I felt around me, but which my mind, my reason, was impotent to formulate. When the whirlwind had passed there was left behind a calm unknown before. The peace which was in the heavens, the peace which was on the sea, had entered into my being; and at last I knew what that man had meant who centuries ago wrote down those exquisite words: “The peace of God which passeth all understanding.”





LITTLE DIFFICULTIES

EPICURUS tells a good story of a smart young man he met in one of the larger down-country stations of India, who, not having a garden of his own, gave his dressing-boy a couple of rupees a month just to keep him supplied daily with a little nosegay for his buttonhole. Whenever he complimented the boy on the beauty of the flowers, he invariably received the answer : ‘ Yes, Sar, my mother’s brother very clever gardener-man.’

However, the truth came out one day, when neither dressing-boy nor buttonhole was forthcoming, but at noon arrived a summons for him to attend the police-court. It appears that serious complaints had been received regarding the constant mutilation of wreaths in the European cemetery. A watch had been set, and it was discovered that this enterprising Aryan youth went

to the cemetery daily in the heat of the day, when no one was about, and clipped the fairest and freshest buds and bits of maiden-hair fern from those marks of tender devotion in order that they might add brightness to his generous master's attire. It was an unpleasant experience, and lest the reputation of a ghoul should cling to him, the smart young man had to forswear his love of flowers and to forsake gay buttonholes for many months.

We were strolling in a garden on a March morning when Epicurus related this anecdote. Daffodils laughed at us from the orchard and the shrubberies, and every bit of rough turf was either purple or white with wild violets. The garden lay in a quiet country. An old cock starnel in blue-bronze uniform sounded through his primrose bill my reveille each morning; wild pheasants strolled about the lawn almost as tame as chickens; and hares, having finished off the last bit of green stuff in the kitchen-garden, had a roll under a cedar before they laid up for the day amid the ground ivy. It was a garden in which any one fond of nature

never wearied, for each hour made history in its unrecorded annals, and every spring day witnessed the birth or the beginning of a new order of things.

We were talking of the trifles that make up the pleasure and pain of life, and how it appeared as if the whole scheme of creation lay at the mercy of the microbe. The rising sap, the lapwing's crest, the young man's fancy turning to thoughts of love, are all now said to be the outcome of the very conservative habits of old-fashioned organisms abiding in the veins of tree, bird, and man, as infinitely small to our senses as God is infinitely great. How long would a man be able to bear the burden of the flesh if the microscopic power of the human eye were raised even a hundredfold? As it is, it needs constant mental effort not to be overwhelmed by the troubles of Lilliput.

I knew a man who destroyed his life because he was not allowed to wear a moustache. That sounds as minute a trifle as can be imagined. He was a waiter in a fashionable London restaurant, where, as you may have noticed, most of the waiters are clean-shaven.

This is the rule until a man attains the rank of manager. The suicide had been temporarily promoted to this rank, but while he enjoyed its emoluments, he was not permitted the facial adornment. Life seemed to him not worth having on these conditions, so he ended it.

‘A story that makes one smile,’ said Epicurus, ‘but unfortunately half the big troubles in this world are not much bigger than that. Perspective and proportion are two subjects that should be well taught to the young; the main difficulty about the teaching is the extraordinary difference of opinion that exists among elders on this very point. What are the little things in life that signify and should be cultivated? You will hardly find the same view in any two grades of society, and when a chance marriage causes an individual fusion between two members drawn from separate classes, there will be constant wrangling over the right emphasis to be laid on the small externals of conduct and behaviour in the upbringing of the children.

‘But it is always well to bear in mind

that nine-tenths of a man's fellow-creatures with whom life throws him into contact have not the time to judge him except by externals. Many a man has had, and ever will have, his reputation made or marred on *primâ facie* evidence. Therefore, to be a successful rogue, the first essential is an honest face ; the second, a fascinating smile ; and the third, a plausible tongue and the art of silence. Given these pleasant attributes, not weighed down by a scruple, and no oyster was ever so easy to open as this old world, which loves to plume itself on its shrewdness and knowledge of mankind.

Personally, I believe it to be the happiest way to accept every man on his own representation. It elevates your view of human nature, and it stimulates your sense of humour. If it be necessary to travel any distance along the same road with a particular individual, leave it to him to discount or put a premium on his own virtues. You arrange the test. Unbeknown to him, set him a task to perform capable of bringing out the qualities which are his special pride. Try him thrice. There may be reasons why

he fails once, or even twice. Afterwards, you may be fairly certain, though not positive, that you have arrived at a right estimate.

‘Friendship, I am told, is frequently regarded in the business world merely as a ledger account. So long as there is a good balance on the right side it is allowed to run, but let this profit show signs of diminishing or of disappearing, and the account is at once closed. I discussed this with a friend, a man of affairs, an optimist to the last least vertebra. Though not rich in himself, he is the cause of riches in others, for he has that influence which persons in other walks of life are able to turn into cash. This amuses him. He has no ambition to make money out of it, but a horror of being mistaken for a good-natured fool, so when he finds those whom he has benefited substantially falling into this error, he asks them casually to lend him a round sum of which he is in no need. It is a play in itself, he says, to watch the changes of expression that will pass over the face of him who a minute before had been most effusive in his gratitude, and professedly

eager to do something to testify to it. He regards these soundings of sincerity among the little dramas of life. The soul is stripped naked in an instant, and a naked soul is always either a mean or a noble spectacle. He has seen both.

‘This optimist told me that in his experience the worst difficulty in business is to carry on pleasant relations with the crooked man, who, after the manner of his kind, believes, with more honesty than you would think possible in such a nature, that a shuffling crooked gait is the distinguishing walk of the wise, and only fools go straight and upright. As a matter of fact, my friend maintains that, notwithstanding what cynics say, the rule in business is exactly the reverse. As regards the crooked man, his advice is to keep on pleasant terms with him as long as possible; don’t get too friendly or confidential, and when the quarrel comes, as come it must if the relationship continues over any length of time, hit hard, straight between the eyes—so hard that one blow is enough.

‘O Business, Business, how many heartless

stupidities are committed in thy name ! You know that delightful story—it is a chest-nut often served up under a new name—of the business man who went a-wooing. And there were two daughters, with a dozen years between them. He spoke to their father about marriage, and was told frankly that the dowry of the elder, who was two-and-thirty, would be three thousand pounds, while the younger girl, just turned twenty, would only receive one thousand pounds. And the would-be bridegroom pondered and said : “ You don’t happen, do you, to have a daughter of about ninety-six ? For you see I ’m a business man.” ’

Epicurus, this talk somehow reminds me of a conversation I had many years ago with a Hindu peasant, a particular friend of mine. He had been, it appears, to a mission service, and had listened to a sermon preached in the vernacular on the text, ‘ Little children, love one another.’ I can still see the old man (he must have gone to his rest now many years) with his kindly brown wrinkled features, a smile playing about the shrewd eyes, squatting on the red

earth, a little distance from where I would sit leaning against a cocoanut tree, and smoking a cheroot after my luncheon, which he always invited me to eat in his orchard of palms when I was snipe-shooting in the neighbourhood.

‘Good talk, Sahib, good talk,’ was his comment, ‘but I’m too old a man for it. How can I love my brother?’ (and he described him minutely in the most unlovely language). ‘He brought a lawsuit against me over a bit of land, and won. How can I love my wife’s sister, that liar?’—it was the least of the spacious epithets he flung at her. ‘The lies she has told about me and my woman! The evil her tongue has done! It’s right I should hate her. It’s the same with many others. But over there,’ and he pointed to a corner of the orchard where I knew his favourite grandson was buried, ‘over there there lies a little child whom I could love. When he was with me we were children; we would play games one with another, and laugh and joke as children do. But God took away the little one, and left the old man to cry, and with no more

love in his heart. The padre made good talk, but it's no use for me. I am an old man, and it's too hard for an old man who knows what sort of folk people really are to love them. If he doesn't hate, he despises.' And the old fellow spat out his betel chew in disgust.

'Like the rest of us,' remarked Epicurus, 'your Hindu friend stumbled on the truth. Inasmuch as love comes naturally to little children, we should preserve to the last the heart of a child. Neither years nor a harsh world should be able to rob us of this inestimable treasure, and children from the first should be encouraged persistently to cultivate charity, that plant of tardy growth. The young are charitable among themselves, but singularly lacking in this virtue where their elders are concerned. They understand the difficulties with which those of their own age have to contend, and find it easy to make allowances for them, but towards the generation above them they are hostile and uncompromising critics, and rarely of themselves attempt to find reason or excuse for faults so visible to their undimmed eyes in those

whose duty it is to preach to them the practice of virtue.

‘Sympathy with those who have passed not unscathed through the trials of humanity should be as much cultivated in the young as sympathy with their fellows above and below them in the social order. It is a sort of preparation for the perils that lie ahead, and as they pass on, these seeds of charity thrive and develop, and there grows up unconsciously within their breast that kindly feeling which in later life is like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, a place of refuge from the hard unblinking glare of evil, and from the cruel scorching of pitiless reality.

‘It is strange how strong is the pain when death snaps the link between two lives in later life—lives that may have been passed apart for many years, and which, in the eyes of the young, seem to be joined together by only the most shadowy bond. They forget the time long past when the two were united in the harmony of love or friendship. So wonderfully is man’s nature built up of impression upon impression, memory upon memory, the impulse of to-day having its

source in word or act or habit of long ago, that when a wrench comes that goes back to the beginnings of life, it causes a strange smart and soreness of heart, which is a hurt different from sorrow and deeper than grief.

‘ Sympathy is a great solvent of little difficulties ; it is often a sure guide when intellect fails. Did I ever tell you the story of my dear old friend, the Presbyter, when he first came to London ? He had been a curate in a country village, where events move for the most part with the slow and orderly progress of Nature, and he had never been called to face a sudden crisis. Of his own accord he sought city work, and was a curate in one of those parishes, common in the Metropolis, where luxury dwells beside misery, and wretchedness sits at the gate of ease, but ever between the two a great gulf is fixed. The Presbyter was by temperament of fastidious tastes. The softer side of existence made a strong appeal to him ; he delighted in music, painting, and the fine arts, and found genuine pleasure in those little niceties which abound in a well-ordered household where means are not straitened.

‘ He had been in London only a few weeks, and on that particular day had been at a musical afternoon in a big house in the parish, where he was cordially welcomed, and where everything was very well done. As he himself told me, when the door shut behind him and he descended the steps, he felt it was the one kind of life that was really worth living. On the way to his rooms he met a working man, who mentioned a bad accident in a slum close by, also in the parish. It was hardly more than a stone’s-throw from the other house. He at once went there, and entered a squalid room on the ground floor of a big old-fashioned mansion, let out in tenements. He had a vague vision of people moving about the room, and of a bent form near the fireplace, and a glimpse of a hag’s bloated face near the window, but all he actually saw was a young man lying on a mattress, his body cruelly broken, breathing heavily. He confessed he lost his head; the contrast with the scene he had just left, the stench of the room, the horror of all the torn skin revealed overcame him. His aversion must have been evident in his manner,

for he dimly recollects a woman screaming, "This ain't no place for yer, young man! Out yer get!"

'When his senses returned, he was kneeling by the mattress holding the man's hand and repeating the Lord's Prayer. Either the familiar sentences awoke an echo of childhood, or in the voice the dying man caught the accents of a friend, for the poor fellow evidently found comfort in his presence, and the harassed look cleared from his eyes as he gasped out: "Look after the old 'un. He ain't half bad. But mother, she do nag so."

'This was really the beginning of the Presbyter's splendid life-work in the slums. Two years ago, as you know, he went home and took his wages. When it is my turn to follow him, if only the wages awaiting me be half as big as those he had earned I shall know that my day also has not been wasted.'





A MODERN RESTAURANT

THE social life of London constantly moves and changes, and its habits alter with each generation. The restaurant as we know it to-day is a notable instance of this. Thousands of men and women are in the habit of making use of these public houses of refreshment as a matter of course, whose highly respectable parents would have been horrified at the mere thought of entering them. It is not infrequently asserted that this restaurant habit works for the destruction of the home. I once urged this argument on Epicurus, who is a strong advocate of these institutions. He declares that you only find this contention on the lips of those who have not comprehended the inner significance of the movement.

‘But what’s the use of talking,’ observed my hospitable friend. ‘Lunch with me at

one of these places, and I will try and make my meaning clear. Come to the Ritz ; it is at the moment the best example the world can show of the restaurant of modern civilisation.'

I went. Epicurus came forward and welcomed me near the door.

'Isn't this corridor charming?' he remarked, as we walked towards the restaurant. 'The architect built better than he knew. The man who arrives here from the City, or other haunts of busy men, alights at the Arlington Street entrance. When he enters he sees the restaurant on the far horizon ; but he has to travel the whole length of this long corridor, crossing several open spaces where friends lie in ambush. Instantly he becomes alert, wondering whom he will meet, for he is certain to meet some one he knows. Before he reaches the restaurant, his mind is clean-washed of the worries and cares of the day ; his business brain-cells become dormant, his social cells awake and grow lively. As he enters, a flood of sunshine greets him, as it greets us to-day, and he sits down, feeling like a god on Olympus, careless

of mankind, only too anxious to pronounce everything set before him is good. There is a great art in preparing a man's mind for the business immediately before him—and not only in restaurants.'

The rise of the Ritz forms an interesting chapter in the modern history of the British tavern. There is a saying among restaurateurs that London can only support one best restaurant at a time. It is a dictum not to be accepted too literally; it is based on the assumption that an educated palate is a rare possession among the English.

Charles, the courteous manager of this famous restaurant, talked to us during luncheon. He told us that the tendency nowadays is towards plain living, simple dishes, with water to drink, or, when wine is taken, light wine. He dwelt on the merits of the chef, and we discussed wonderful and original dishes.

'This talk is gluttonous,' I said, when he had moved away.

Epicurus would not have it so. He declared that as a people we English suffer far more from sameness than from excess of

food. The stomach is a queasy beast, and if not paid a right respect has a horrid hidden way of working out its revenge. It cries aloud for change, perhaps because it is carnivorous. A tiger grows tired of beef—venison, venison—beef, all the days of its life, and takes to a diet of man, bringing on itself Western weapons of destruction. So man, wearying of monotony in his victuals, finds distraction in a variety of drinks, and suffers in the end worse things than expanding bullets.

‘At what stage in his career did man take to a flesh diet?’ asked Epicurus. ‘And why? Was it by an accident, after the fashion in which the New Zealand parrot acquired a taste for sheep’s kidneys? Or may there have been a great famine in all manner of green food which compelled him to sustain life by grosser means? Generations of flesh-eating ancestors have not rendered our digestive organs unfitted for the purpose they existed for in our primal forebears among the tree-tops; on the contrary, doctors incline more and more to the belief that the less man is carnivorous, the better his health,

morals, and temper. Vegetarians multiply, and in the distant future there may arrive a Ninth of November when all animal food, from the turtle in the soup to the *foie gras* among the *pâtés*, shall be banished from the Lord Mayor's banquet. Meantime, meat is cheap, and vegetables give a lot of trouble to cook properly.'

While my friend is prepared to renounce flesh, he refuses point-blank to abstain from wine, for he always derives genuine artistic pleasure from the juice of the grape. The supreme summit of perfection, so far as the palate is concerned, is attained, in his opinion, by two, and only two, things—a ripe nectarine, picked from a sunny wall and eaten then and there, and a bottle of vintage claret in absolute condition. All other delights of the table are a little lower than these.

It troubles him how greatly the taste for claret has fallen off, not only in England, but even in Scotland, where once upon a time a connoisseur in the wines of Bordeaux took rank among her distinguished sons. However much one may like champagne—and who does not?—it has, he asserts, always

this one fault: the first glass is the best. With claret, it is only as the bottle runs low that the excellent soul of the wine is borne in upon the banqueters; when the final drop is drained, they sniff the cork sorrowfully for the last faint odour of the bouquet, and sigh: 'Ah! when shall we ever taste its like again?' To drown their grief, they order another bottle, but of another vineyard and vintage, and in ten minutes they are comparing the virtues of their new friend with those of the incomparable one that has gone before, and not always to the advantage of the dear departed.

Good wine mellows the human character. It is as though by divine alchemy the virtue of the sunbeams that rested on the vineyards and brought their purple harvest to fruition had entered the grape and become part of its living substance. And through wine-press, vat, and bottle it remains—that mysterious virtue, that very real healing-power of the sun.

But it is coming to pass in these days that he who would pose as an arbiter of good living must be a judge of water rather than

of wine. Nothing is more surprising than the extraordinary demand that has arisen recently for natural mineral waters. Good Thames fluid from the pantry tap is despised ; one man must have water from Connecticut ; another from Carlsbad ; another water from the Malvern Hills ; a fourth from the Vosges Mountains ; and a fifth from the Savoy Alps. Even Japan is shipping mineral waters to England. There be wine-merchants, and water-merchants, and the water-merchants do not do the worse business. A choice of seventy different waters from seventy different springs scattered over the face of the globe they will offer to you—still waters that run deep, fizzy waters that bubble deeper, waters to cleanse from an afflicted frame every ache and pain on which medical science has bestowed a name. Your grandfather—selfish man—bequeathed you gout from an excessive love of port ; so now purge from your veins the poison of alcohol with the purifying waters of alkali, and your grandsons will be grateful. Will they ?

‘Think of the fortune, lost and gone for ever, which would have been made by the

owner of the little well at Bethlehem for a draught from which King David cried aloud, had only that incident happened three thousand years later,' sighed Epicurus. 'But to go back to food, isn't it a thousand pities that in so many households the only brains to reach the kitchen should come in with the calf's head ?

'Now, in the homes of Utopia,' he continued, 'one meal in the week is dedicated to the Unknown Dish. Among the family heirlooms is preserved the table-book, a comely volume bound in couleur-de-rose vellum, handed down from generation to generation. If an experiment be approved by any one member of the family, it is tried again. Thrice must the dish be tested; then, if all commend it, it is the duty of the eldest daughter, with her tapering, lily-white fingers, to inscribe the ingredients of the new dish in letters of gold in the table-book, while the parents pour out a libation of purple wine to the Penates.'

'England is not Utopia, Epicurus.'

'No,' he answered sorrowfully; 'the two are almost as far distant as in Tudor days.'

Still in London many of us have restaurants for our relief. The food there may be no better, possibly even worse than at home, but it has a pleasant savour, for the environment is new, and there is an escape for the moment from galling routine. Is not the greater part of all human enjoyment escape from the prison-house of uncongenial environment ? "

Some part, no doubt, is due to being able to convert the same prison-house into a pleasant pavilion ; and, now and again, there pass through life happy souls who are never touched even by a thought that they could possibly be happier than they naturally are. This good fortune is so rare that it hardly counts.

' But why,' he asked, ' isn't every corner pub a little Ritz ? It ought not to be a question of income whether a temperate man, who likes a drop of something with his meat, should or should not be able to take his family with him when he has his dinner away from home.'

' Think of the drinking habits of the lower classes,' I ejaculated.

‘What do you know of the lower classes?’ he exclaimed angrily. ‘There was a time in India when you jeered at me as an ignorant globe-trotter. You are now no better. You are only a half-informed social-trotter, like the rest of the crowd. There is a craze to make cheap excursions into the unknown lives of our fellow-men, be they more or less fortunate than ourselves. I don’t refer to real sympathy and help, but to those Othellos who, to win easy admiration, unfold tales of antres vast and deserts idle, and idle rich and thriftless poor, and anthropophagi, and all the rest of it. ’Tis pitiful, ’tis wondrous pitiful! The lower classes, let me tell you, are better judges of what they eat and drink than the majority of these people, who come to this restaurant simply because it is the fashion, and have only the faintest perception of the true nature of its solids and fluids. Good food, at best, is only of relative excellence; often it is merely a matter of imagination, for a normal appetite is readily hypnotised if you go about it in the right way.

‘The essential charm of this delightful

dining-room lies in its sunlight, in its perfect ventilation, in its mellow atmosphere. These can be reproduced beneath the lowliest roof. I would make ground glass in any public-house a penal offence, and bad ventilation punishable by heavy fines ; I would do everything to oust the degrading elements and to encourage bright and gentle influences. Were this done, and I am convinced it is possible, the drink evil, as we know it to-day, would vanish in a generation, and drunkenness among the lower classes would then be a question not for reformers, but for doctors, as it is already among the higher classes.'

It seems probable that as long as man exists he will demand stimulant in some form or other, whether it be alcohol or opium, music or pictures. The modern restaurant has proved conclusively that music and flowers do constitute, to a large extent, an efficient substitute for alcohol during the process of eating. The general tendency of society, as Charles stated, is to drink lighter wine and less wine, and to be more and more particular about the grace and delicacy of the surroundings.

‘Answer me this,’ said Epicurus. ‘Why does practically every fashionable restaurant nowadays have flowers on the table, and why is a band no longer considered an essential, especially at luncheon?’

I attributed it to a better understanding of the emotional value of beauty from a commercial standpoint.

‘And you think that the vibrations of light are a sufficient stimulant for a cultured brain, unless it be tired, when the coarser excitation of sound is needed? I hope so. The high heaven of my fancies is always a home of silence, the music of its courts existing in thoughts and actions, not in noise.

‘It is curious the uplifting influence flowers possess over the human heart. I am told there is nothing harder than to walk through the East End with a bunch of roses in one’s hand without giving them away. The most touching appeals are made for just one flower. Respond to them, and in five minutes your roses have fled. Flowers have, of course, two aspects: there is the soul of them and the colour of them. It was John Dod, the old Puritan divine, who,

when invited to see Holdenby, the stately house erected by Sir Christopher Hatton, desired to be excused and to sit still looking on a flower he had in his hand, saying :—

“In this flower I can see more of God than in all the beautiful buildings in the world.”

‘Fuller tells the story. This, of course, is carrying a beautiful idea to the verge of the ridiculous.

‘Regard this buffet,’ said Epicurus, as we were walking out of the restaurant. ‘There is hardly a delicacy that can be served cold which is missing from it. Had such a table been prepared for a Roman emperor, the reward would have been the revenues of half a continent, possibly deification. But if you were hungry, and turned into a public-house, and found set out on a clean cloth a round of cold beef and a crusty loaf, would not that in your eyes be an ample buffet?’

‘Perhaps,’ I answered. ‘Anyway, you have given me a most excellent luncheon.’

Epicurus smiled, and said : ‘If during the week you were to find yourself in the country

with a gun on your arm and a packet of sandwiches in your pocket, I wonder which luncheon would seem to you the better—five courses and Palmer Margaux at the Ritz, or sandwiches and a flask of whisky and water with your feet in a dry ditch ? ’





BANQUET-TABLES OF EMPIRE

THE tables are spread, the guests are summoned to the banquets. From north, south, east, and west arrive argosies laden with the spoils of garden, orchard, and vineyard ; of river, lake, and sea ; of forest, prairie, and plantation. Is there any land in any latitude which does not contribute a delicacy to the banquet-tables of Britain ?

Cæsar, reclining in the marble palaces of Imperial Rome, boasted that every clime furnished his gluttonous board ; but nowadays, for a silver crown the humblest citizen of Imperial London may regale himself on the tribute of more countries than ever Cæsar dreamt of. To prepare on a winter day even an ordinary dessert of apples, oranges, plums, figs, dates, and nuts, Europe, Asia, Africa, both the Americas, and Australasia have to be taxed. There is more romance in Covent

Garden than in half the fiction issued by the publishing houses that cluster round the market.

‘The present generation,’ said Epicurus, ‘accept as a matter of course that bread must be cheap, meat not too dear, tea eighteen-pence a pound, and coffee about the same ; that apples, oranges, and lemons shall be plentiful all the year round, and that it shall be possible to buy in England fresh fruit in midwinter and at quite a low price. Yet, all the while, the peoples of the earth increase and multiply. How is it done ? Are we witnesses of a daily recurrence of the miracle of feeding the multitudes ?

‘It sounds unromantic, but the true reason probably lies in the fact that we come of a breed that, in a state of barbarian energy, were half pirates, half farmers ; or, if you prefer to put it in a more amiable way, that we spring from a race who have ever been smitten with the violent madness of conquest. When not fighting our fellow-men, we have fought the sea ; and when these battles have ceased, we have turned and fought the earth. Many have been the

defeats, very disastrous for individuals, and none worse than in those struggles against Nature in her most savage and sullen moods. But the balance of the long warfare has been victory.

‘The sailor, the soldier, the administrator, and even the missionary have had their achievements chronicled in golden letters on the scroll of fame; but silence shrouds in oblivion the personal deeds of the ploughman, the shepherd, and the planter. Yet these countrymen of ours have played a splendid part in the beneficent work of Empire.

‘They have improved on Swift’s saying—
“Whoever can make two ears of corn to grow or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before deserves better of mankind, and does more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.” They have made corn to grow where no corn grew before, and have converted the solitudes into rich pasture-lands. Their story is a romance full of endurance, devotion, beauty of life, self-sacrifice, unrequited toil, torment of life, risk of death, death, defeat, and triumph.

You know something of the planter in tropical lands. Why is tea cheap ? ’

Seventy years ago the tea plantations of India and Ceylon were for the most part jungle. Stories were rife of valleys of death, where if a man slept for a night he was a corpse on the morrow ; and there were rivers of poisoned waters—to drink of them was to die. Those wild lands were uninhabited except for a few indigenous tribes, who lived partly by hunting and scratching the surface soil, and partly by the collection of wild honey, gall-nuts, and such produce, sole harvest of thousands of fertile acres.

Then came the Anglo-Saxon, cutting his way through the forest and cultivating as he went, who quickly discovered that those old tales of deadly valleys and rivers of death were no myths ; for in them dwelt a dragon whose breath was more fatal than the fiery breathing of any fabled monster that devastated ancient lands. The name of that dragon is Malaria. Scores died, many before they had reached manhood, but still the battle went forward. Mile after mile was slowly conquered, and districts where forty years

ago, or less, white men died off like rotten sheep are to-day healthy and prosperous, yielding tons of tea.

It is hard to picture the loneliness of that life in its earlier stages. Week after week went by, with no sight or word of a neighbour. Sickness came, and there was no doctor within hail. A man had to wrestle with disease by himself, or perish. Many died, and in utter loneliness. One man I know of ended his life so. The first news of his death was when a friend by chance happened to ride up to his bungalow; he shouted, but no answer came. He wandered through the deserted house, and when he opened the bedroom door there was a scuttling of rats, and on the bed—— You understand? It's ghastly, but it was thus the fight went on; it was thus the triumph came.

Cheap tea has not been bought cheaply; every penny a pound that has been knocked off the fancy price when it was only a China luxury for the rich has been at the expense of Anglo-Saxon lives.

‘The struggle for the wheat-fields of the

West,' said Epicurus, 'has been at least as severe, if you go back to the early days of Red Indian warfare. If the tomahawk was not always so sure in its strike as the malarial microbe, when it did fall it did its work thoroughly. To me the greatest of all North American wonders is the extraordinary rapidity with which the Old World has flooded that continent and fertilised it. In Canada you may still see the operation in actual progress. Visit that country every two or three years, and you will perceive how rapidly victory moves forward once man gets a firm grip on Nature. But it's fighting all the time; it's no child's-play. A stout heart and indomitable courage are needed by men and women who take service in this war. You may tempt them to the colours with promises of quick wealth and rapid social promotion, but not all the gold that ever was minted, not all the honours that ever monarch bestowed, would bribe men to continue in the fighting-line if the will were wanting.

'This struggle for new corn-fields and orchards in those great mountain valleys,

which promise before this century passes to be among the fairest spots upon earth, is still proceeding, and the brawn and the brain and the heartache that are bent to the work are mainly supplied by the Anglo-Saxon race. You remember those words of Ruskin :—
“No scene is continually and untiringly loved but one rich by joyful human labour ; smooth in field ; fair in garden ; full in orchard ; trim, sweet, and frequent in homestead ; ringing with voices of vivid existence.”

‘They are true, eternally true, but how many lives go to the sacrifice that these scenes may exist in the solitudes of those far lone lands.’

In South Africa, I added, whence come to England now choice fruits at a time of year when we need them most, the Dutch bore the brunt of the battle, but Englishmen have not been backward in the fight. The gold mines and the diamond pits will become extinct in the course of time, but the ploughland, the orchard, the vineyard, and the meadow will endure. In the Millennium, towards which the race is working, the lion will have to eat straw like the ox, or dis-

appear ; and if the leopard cannot be at peace with the kid, or the wolf with the lamb, they die ; the kid and the lamb live on.

It is in tropical lands that the old war first declared by Adam against thorns and thistles, and the beasts and creeping things that dwell among them, and which has been carried on by his children with more or less energy ever since, strikes the imagination with greatest force. The battle seems to rage there more hotly ; death strikes so suddenly, and one hears the groans of the wounded and sees the horrors of the maimed more clearly under burning suns. But there are perils and dangers in all lands.

As I write, I see a tract of grass-land covering the slopes and folds of mountains that rise gently from either bank of a river. Sheep feed among the trees, which plentifully dot the landscape ; grey, ghostly trunks, which give no beauty to the scene, no shade to the flocks. It is a forest of skeletons ; every tree dead, stem and branch—eucalypti which have been ‘ ringed ’ on a sheep-run in New South Wales. Presently comes the drought ; the grass withers, the river gasps its life

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away in pools that each week get fewer and farther between. A spark falls—how, who can say?—and the wild fire is let loose. The noise of the waterfloods is soft music compared with the fury of the wild fire as it rushes forward, roaring and leaping and flinging its red banners above the dense clouds of smoke that blacken noonday into midnight. Behind the flames hover crows and carrion birds, who know their hour for banqueting has come. This is war with a vengeance, and with an enemy before whose onslaught man for the moment is impotent.

There is surely in every man born of woman a strain of heroism which only requires the right circumstances to call out. Heroism, viewed in one light, is of all qualities the least heroic; just a by-product of self-respect. At times it is almost commonplace. You meet it in the least expected places, where it is taken as a matter of course, as part of the day's work. Once in a while the limelight is thrown upon it; then it's 'See the Conquering Hero comes.'

But there are conquering heroes for whom

no band plays, whose actions are hidden for ever from the world's white light.

You remember Dargai—that heroic rush across a bullet-swept glacis on the north-west frontier of India in the autumn of 1897 ? Two V.C.'s and other distinctions were gained by brave men, but the bravest man that day only received a death-wound. He was Captain Robinson, of the 2nd Ghurkas, who crossed that lead-whipped terrace three times. First he rushed it with a company of his men and put them under cover ; finding they were not enough to carry the position, he went back alone down that fatal path, and a third time he faced it with more men, when he fell, mortally wounded. That man never became a hero in the popular sense ; but since the hour when I heard his story from the lips of an eye-witness, Robinson of the 2nd Ghurkas has always stood in my mind for the thousands of heroic Robinsons who are carrying on the work of the Empire unrequited and unsung.

Think of the awful loneliness many of the shepherds of the Antipodes lead ; is there a more cruel test of manhood ?

‘ It always strikes me as a little curious,’

replied Epicurus, 'that the same people who are painfully shocked at the torment prisoners suffer at home from a few days' solitary confinement can sit down at their feasts and ignore with serene complacency the same punishment which their kith and kin endure for months at a time in order that their tables shall be bounteously supplied. Every year throughout the Empire, whether under tropical skies or amid the snows of Canada, or in the summer lands of the Southern Hemisphere, there are hundreds of these Imperial purveyors of cheap food who celebrate a lonely Christmas with those lines of Kipling throbbing in their brain :—

"O the toil that knows no breaking! O the
heimveh, ceaseless, aching!

O the black dividing Sea and alien Plain!

Youth was cheap—wherefore we sold it. Gold
was good—we hoped to hold it:

And to-day we know the fulness of our gain."

Epicurus, I am glad you know that song of exile, our English 'By the Waters of Babylon.' When the Anglo-Indian journalist, a youth of twenty, translated the agony of exile into those burning words—words

that no man who has suffered can read, though it be years since his exile ended, without awakening the old pain—he did not sign them with his name. They were first published in an Anglo-Indian newspaper as from ‘A Dyspeptic.’ He was true to his race even in this last little detail. For, know you, that while the fox gnaws at the breast, the men, even though they wince, will not confess their anguish. ‘Just a touch of dyspepsia,’ they mutter, as they turn to their work; ‘nothing to speak of!’

But do you honestly believe you can awaken any living sympathy with those exiles among stay-at-homes? Tell your smug citizen, in his over-furnished home, with his family around him, and his pet vices carefully concealed, what they suffer, and he shrugs his shoulders, and observes with a sneer he supposes they went out there for money, for the sake of gold, that is to say, for the same reason that he bluffs and bullies and lies comfortably at home. Does money tarnish everything it touches?

‘That is wild talk,’ said Epicurus, in a tone of rebuke, ‘and not just; you are angry, but

I fancy I see your meaning. Some years ago, in a rough corner of the world, I went down a gold-mine, or rather into one, for it was a tunnel run into the side of a steep hill that dropped to a forest two thousand feet below. When we had scrambled about a furlong within the hill, it was a wonderful sight to look back over the waving tree-tops; they appeared a restless sea, grey-green, beautiful, unearthly.

‘ We went on to the mill, a small mill in a corrugated iron shed. The crushing of the quartz made a fearful noise. After the sunshine in the open, the shadows within perplexed the eye, so I could only see the iron stamps vaguely in the half light. There was something pitiless about their irresistible power, something cruel and merciless in their unswerving fall and rise. It seemed right they should be hidden from God’s heaven. Gold! gold! gold! That was all one heard in the roar and the tramp of those iron feet. Nothing else mattered. They slaved and hammered and crushed with one object—gold, gold, gold. It was horrible. Every collop of rock as it fell within their reach

seemed to typify a life to be ground into dust for gain.

' But somewhere through the iron roofing a sunbeam strayed into the shed and touched those iron feet with a golden rod—gold from an imperishable mine. Still the stamps roared on, but no longer to that ruthless chorus. In their din I heard the clamour of life ; in their steady tread I saw the relentless march of years ; the waters that poured over the plates were the tears of sorrow and the waters of strife. All that was earthy was washed away, a residue remaining on the plates—amalgam, they call it—to be gathered up and tested by fire for the gold. When all that is of the earth earthy in man is washed away, how small the residue that remains ! That, too, must be tried in the fires of Eternity, and then, if there be found a little gold, will it not be well with him ? '





DÎNER MAIGRE

THE hour has not come when the story of the modern restaurant can be told to advantage. It will be an interesting chapter in the social history of the Metropolis. The restaurant has taken to itself the best of the tavern and the club, and has established firm foundations in the flat land of respectability.

César Ritz, the little Swiss goat-herd, who ran away to see the world, and started life for himself by washing-up dishes in a small French inn, will always be remembered. His name is now inseparably associated with the best organised and most luxurious style of modern hotel. The Franco-Prussian War provided Ritz with many able colleagues; among them was Maître Escoffier, who, during that struggle, cooked for two emperors—the Emperor of the French at Sedan, afterwards the German Emperor.

Under the present system of hotel and restaurant organisation, the public hears little of individual chefs; their names are unfamiliar, and their deeds, though they may be as glorious as in the days of old, pass unrecorded. Escoffier, a dapper little grey-haired Frenchman, with an air of distinction and a charming manner, may almost be called the Last of the Chefs. It was my good fortune to run across him on the very morning that I had received a letter from Epicurus suggesting a *dîner maigre*. Escoffier very kindly consented to relieve me of the task of ordering it. This is the menu we found on our table at the Carlton restaurant :—

Natives.

Germiny.

Soles Meunière aux Laitances.

Mousse d'Éperlans au Curry.

Riz Pilaw.

Médailles d'œufs Périgourdine.

Pointes d'asperges.

Sarcelles au Porto.

Salade d'oranges.

Fonds d'artichaut au Parmesan.

Souffle en surprise aux cerises.

Friandises.

'If a Briton wishes to feel British to the backbone he ought really, I suppose, to eat oysters, and not roast beef,' said Epicurus, as we began dinner, 'for the reputation of the British oyster goes back to the dim ages. Long before the Motherland had become notorious on the Continent either for her valour or her want of manners, she had acquired renown through the fine flavour of her "natives." We are not sufficiently grateful to the oyster for his good introduction.'

'Expense may have something to say to that,' I suggested ; 'half a crown or three and sixpence is a good price to pay for a dozen blobs of sea water, seasoned with vinegar or lemon juice.'

'Don't speak disrespectfully of an oyster ; he furnishes a noble example of the value of heredity. Remember, you bought oysters for me once at fourpence a hundred.'

This incident did not happen in England, but many years ago, when Epicurus was with me in India. My bungalow was on a hill overlooking a palm-fringed bay. A mile from shore a reef fretted blue water. We

would of a morning watch a fisherman put off from the shore in a dug-out; anchoring by the reef, he dived thrice, by which time he had plucked enough oysters for a day's wage. Straight from the deep sea to the table they came, plump little bodies in small crinkled shells, the very incarnation of ozone. That was the way to eat oysters to perfection. Nothing touched them, neither vinegar nor lime juice, only were they lightly powdered with black pepper from the garden—peppercorns that had been picked ruddy-ripe from the pepper vines which clambered in profusion over the trees round the bungalow.

‘Good sorrel broth!’ exclaimed Epicurus, as he swallowed his soup. ‘I could fast comfortably on this all the year round.’

Doubtless so, for in the making of *germiny* the last process is to add to the broth with its delicate taste of sorrel half a dozen yolks of eggs and half a pint of cream. It could hardly be called a lean dinner were one to dine simply off *germiny* and a loaf of bread. The smelt is not an exciting fish, ordinarily speaking, but when translated into a *mousse* by the cunning of an Escoffier it becomes

etherealised. We agreed that the *mousse* was the particular triumph of the evening. In France, since the reign of Louis XIV., custom has decreed that water-fowl is permissible on a fast day, which accounts for the presence of teal on this menu. The orange salad emphasised their excellence.

By a curious metamorphosis, lettuce and salad have come to be used in this country as interchangeable words, which is as though every salad must be compounded of this single green-meat, whereas there are scores of vegetables and fruits crying out to be turned loose into a salad-bowl, and thus add that variety to our tables which we are badly in need of. Apple, pineapple, almonds, and walnuts only require proper mixing and dressing to give a new dignity to the humblest joint of cold meat. These simple ingredients are all ready at hand, though none of them perhaps quite come up to the heart of a coconut-tree, that best of all salads, tender, cool, and crisp, tasting like the most delicious hazel-nuts. Cocoanut salad is a luxury, for each cabbage, as it is called, means the sacrifice of a full-grown tree, and a cocoa-

nut-tree takes twelve years to come to maturity.

‘Celeriac always recalls to me cocoanut cabbage,’ said Epicurus; ‘not that it approaches it in flavour, but I never taste celeriac without being reminded of the Rajah and the cocoanut-tree. Food has a wonderful mnemonic influence. The last Rajah of Coorg, which, as you know, is a curious little South Indian kingdom on the edge of the Western Ghats, sat before his palace some seventy years ago waiting to receive British envoys. Palms grew in that courtyard, shadowing the stone pavement, and on this morning, as on other mornings, toddy-drawers were at work among their fronds, collecting the liquor. The Rajah questioned the envoys closely about the power of their girl-queen, whether her subjects were obedient to her unto death, etc.

‘“Are they as obedient as mine?” he asked.

‘Clapping his hands, he shouted to two men in the palm-tops, “Drop!”

‘The men let go their hold without a word, and rebounded from the pavement—dead.

‘ It was this same monarch, always merry and bright, who introduced a sporting element into capital punishment. Prisoners under sentence of death were taken to his palace at Mercara, and confined in a room on one side of the palace-yard. Overlooking the yard on an upper floor was a bow window, where the Princes of Coorg gave audience to their subjects. Here the Rajah would sit of an afternoon with a rifle on his knees ; the condemned men had to bolt across the yard to a door on the farther side, which, if they reached alive, they were, *ipso facto*, pardoned. Pardons were rare, for the Rajah, drunken old ruffian though he was, was a first-rate shot. It is told that he usually preferred the head shot, which is the only thing you can say in his favour.’

We drank with our dinner a light champagne—not claret on this occasion. The one thing I dislike about champagne is the vulgarity of which it has never been able to rid itself. That is not the grape’s fault. There can be nothing inherently vulgar in a liquor which gives life to the dying. Many a man has been brought back from the brink

of the grave by champagne. Write down that to its credit.

A few miles, a slightly changed environment, and how great the difference ! Champagne stands in London for luxury, wealth, and ostentation ; but in Rheims, just across the Channel, it represents industry in field and factory, hard work, and unremitting care. The vine and its produce are interwoven into the religious life of that historical city, the ancient Westminster of France. The graven scroll of grapes and vine leaves round its cathedral is world-famous, and all who have visited that miracle of architecture will have noticed the vintner with his cask standing among the elect, on the Right Hand, in the sculptured scene of ' The Last Judgment ' over the north door.

The vast cellars in which the wine is stored during the process of ripening are in their origin old chalk quarries, whence came the slabs of chalk to build the walls and towers and gateways of the city from the days of Julius Cæsar. The vineyards are, many of them, nothing more than little strips of land, on the slopes of the hills to the west of the

city. Here you will see a rood or two of vines flanked on one side by wheat, and on the other by cabbages. There is a homeliness about champagne in the growing and the making which is in striking contrast with the gorgeous scenes commonly associated with the drinking of it. And the story of the wine throbs with imagination.

‘So does the selling of it,’ retorted Epicurus; ‘outside a few experts in the business, I do not believe there are a dozen men in London who could distinguish between half a dozen brands of the same character and vintage were it not for the label.’

You mean to tell me there is no truth in one wine being better than another among the recognised marks?

‘You talk foolishly,’ replied Epicurus; ‘were jesting Pilate to put again the old question, and for once to wait for an answer, could you answer him? Truth to-day is what you make the other man believe; it is so in politics, it is often so in business. Truth may be compact of fact, diluted with fact, or devoid of fact. But if a man accepts a statement, whatever it be, then that accept-

ance stamps it as true. The only trouble is that you are sometimes placed on the horns of a very awkward dilemma—either you must accept a statement and declare yourself a fool, or, refusing it, pronounce the other man a liar. It is a pretty trial of strength between good manners and good sense. Now, as regards champagne, I am convinced that if you can make a man believe that whatever he is drinking is the best, it will, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, be truly so to him; it is another instance of mental suggestion controlling the palate, and it is the reason why fashionable brands, notwithstanding you may find in them no particular excellence to account for their excessive price, are the ones that are most in demand.’

‘Was Moses the true author of the Ten Commandments?’ Epicurus suddenly asked. ‘If so, he was the most wonderful man on record. Imagine any one of our leaders of the people drawing up a code of polity in ten sentences, which should form the basis of the political life of the most progressive nations on the face of the earth three

thousand years hence. That was the achievement of Moses in the sphere of ethics.

‘ More interesting to me was his apparently intimate knowledge of questions which we are inclined to regard as new—heredity, for instance. Also, was it only acute observation that caused him to detect in the bacillus of putrefaction one of the most deadly foes of the human race ? Most of his laws on food are practical methods of defence against this arch-enemy of mankind—an enemy that comes into existence and multiplies far more rapidly in hot climates than in cold.

‘ It is curious to find in a family in which there may be only a trace of Jewish blood an innate hatred by some members of it against kidneys, sweetbreads, etc., which by others are regarded as delicacies. One can only account for it by an inherited aversion. The well-known dislike of the servants’ hall for venison may possibly be in part due to cautious parental teaching over several generations that deer’s meat was foul meat, in times when temptation to poach was great, and deer-stealing a capital offence. And the Reformation possibly is

responsible for England's extraordinary neglect of her abundant supplies of fish. One can well imagine a stiff-necked Puritan banishing with contumely from his table this best of food because it savoured of Popish customs, thus building up a foolish prejudice in the minds of his posterity that fish-eating was a mark of social unworthiness.'

Cheap carriage and cold storage are doing much nowadays to popularise fish as an article of diet ; but the progress is comparatively slow. Only the slightest attention is paid to fresh-water fish. Yet a pike, stuffed and baked, is an excellent dish for a hungry man. Many ■ one have I eaten in my youth, but only once have I tasted it in later years. It was in France, on a *jour maigre* in November. I happened to be the guest of a very hospitable host ; he, knowing I was not debarred from butcher's meat by religious scruples, provided to my chagrin in place of the fish a special chop. It almost made me ashamed of my creed ! But I refused the chop and ate the fish.

One would like to see the old stew-ponds stocked again. There may come a day when

fish, fresh-water and salt-water, will stand between the nation and starvation, and it appears to many culpable neglect that so little heed is paid to this valuable source of food-supply. The question of cooking probably again crops up. Fish, to be really palatable, requires more trouble in the kitchen than meat. Given that trouble, it is far and away the pleasanter diet.

After dinner the subject of some recent railway accidents occurred, and Epicurus raised the question whether a man is ever possessed of a devil. We are nowadays always ready with a plausible explanation for the most unaccountable acts of man, and the rule is to accept it without hesitation, more especially if it be expressed in abstruse terms. Yet every one must be familiar with that sensation of being at times impelled to do or say something which he knows must work harm to himself or others. This irresponsibility seems to arise from some outside force, some strong telepathic influence working on a mind perhaps weakened or rendered morbid by physical or moral ailment. It is for all the world as if a devil,

an unclean spirit, a power of darkness, a minister of hell, did in truth for the time being enter into possession of the human body, and through it work destruction on humanity. Until science can define the origin of mental consciousness much more clearly than is possible at present, a reasonable man has a perfect right to believe in the existence of powers beyond our ken by which he is directly influenced.

There came to our memory an impressive ceremony in an Indian palm-grove on which we chanced many years ago. It was a quiet tropical night, and walking home from the club about midnight, there fell on our ears the deep tone of a bell struck softly. We stood still and heard the murmur of slowly spoken words. Climbing a wall, a brown thatched cottage, set in its own little orchard, was before us. The verandah was lighted by a tall native lamp of polished brass, consisting of three shallow tiers which held flickering wicks floating in vegetable oil. The light they cast was soft and wavering. A young woman with a baby in her arms sat cross-legged on the floor at one end of the

verandah. The girl was richly dressed in crimson robes and laden with golden ornaments, barbaric earrings and bracelets, and round her neck chains of English sovereigns linked together. Mystic circles were marked about the mother and child with petals of white jasmine and scarlet hibiscus, and at the other end of the verandah, facing the two, a small altar, as it were, covered with flowers, bright with lighted oil-wicks, and in a vessel at the highest point a cocoanut. A priest smeared with ashes sat by, and his sonorous sentences rose and fell to the sleepy rhythm of the sea which broke gently on the beach not a hundred yards away. Outside the cottage, in the half-light, the relations of the girl squatted in little groups.

We had stumbled on some old ceremony—old as the stars that hung in the velvet sky above our heads. A big mango-tree formed a background of gloom, and round about the cottage were palm-trees, their trunks the columns, and their leaves the arched roof of this place of ancient worship. The delicate silver shaft of an areca-nut palm—the loveliest palm on earth—caught here and there

the flicker of the lamps. There came a pause : a chopper was put in the girl's hand. She rose, and, with the baby astride her hip, stepped to the altar. The tense silence that fell on all marked that the supreme moment had come. The girl struck the cocoanut true ; it fell to the ground cut cleanly in half. A murmur of grateful sound marked the act.

Both mother and child had, it appears, been possessed by devils : nothing they could do went well ; their health suffered, they slept ill at nights, and dreamed evil dreams. A priest had been summoned. He would pray, but he could not guarantee the efficacy of his prayers. That could only be told at the last moment when the mother struck the cocoanut. Had the hatchet glanced aside, the devils would have remained, but when she severed it they went forth as the milk streamed from the nut, and she and her child were clean and whole again from that hour.





THE CLEAN TABLE-CLOTH

Illness

‘PREACH vigorously the gospel of the clean table-cloth’ is a favourite saying of Epicurus.

A clean table-cloth is to him the symbol of luxurious living, for, to his mind, true luxury lies in delicate simplicities. It is, he asserts, far less the lack of riches than of proper education which places the pleasures of the table beyond the attainment of the many. He declares that no hog ever issued from the sty of his ancient namesake ; many have entered it swine and have come forth men, for the true epicurean knows a spell that is the exact opposite of Circe’s. There is more morality in a clean table-cloth than in a score of sermons, a stronger influence to temperance than in a gross of tracts. The mere laying of it uplifts the mind, and its presence removes coarseness from eating and drinking, one of the bestial necessities of

daily life, by giving an air of refinement and of beauty consecrated to cleanliness to the very simplest meal. Given a clean cloth, and the other gentle graces of the table are added to it.

‘Seeing what a mighty minister of the mind the stomach is, why,’ Epicurus asks, ‘should we not systematically train it to be a servant on whose good offices we can always rely? But one day we despise it, and the next overload it with kindness; then wonder because now it sulks, and now it gets up and kicks. Surely the disciplined pleasures of the table may be openly cultivated in Christian lands, knowing, as a matter of history, what a part they played in the scattered households of the first to bear that name.’

Christianity alone among great religions is not hygienic. It teaches the virtue of healing sickness, but it has no laws of health, no forbidden meats, no rules of bodily well-being. That this is not as it should be appears to have been the opinion of the Church from early times; for it has made frequent attempts to reach the soul through

the alimentary canal, some wise, some otherwise.

‘There is nothing more foolish than intemperate denunciation of intemperance. Excess occasionally is an excellent tonic. I know a man who is firmly persuaded that he twice saved his life by deliberately getting drunk—once it was a threatening of cholera and the best part of a bottle of brandy. He never remembered going to bed that night, but awoke in the morning free from cholera germs, but with the worst headache he had ever had in his life. The other time, unable to obtain sleep after a bout of fever, and being distant from doctors and medicine, he drank nearly half a gallon of champagne, and staggered to his couch with the world reeling under him, to wake up sixteen hours later a new and refreshed man. It is pleasant to say a kind word even for the blackest-painted devil.’

We have often discussed this subject. A human being, however low he may stand in the scale of civilisation, never takes to drink for the pleasure of swilling. Leaving disease out of the question, drunkenness is the sign

of an unsatisfying environment, and is as a rule curable once a right diagnosis of the unhealthy conditions has been made. Certainly it is so in this land, but so far temperance legislation seems to have been directed to the creation of drunkards at the biggest possible profit per head to the State.

The majority of mankind crave for stimulant in some form or other. In these islands alcohol is the most easily obtainable. If taken to excess it is a very pernicious poison, extending from one generation to another. The State admits all this, and it undertakes the control of its distribution.

But how does it act towards that section of the community for whom the stimulation of alcohol forms the readiest antidote against the dull ache of continuous toil and unavoidable wretchedness? These are the very persons for whom this relief should be the most carefully safeguarded by all circumstances which minimise temptation to excess. Poverty prevents private storage; it can only purchase in small quantities this form of pleasure, for alcohol is beyond dispute a pleasure to multitudes, whether it takes the form of a

pot of ale or a glass of claret, of two-penn'orth of gin or a pint of champagne. We, the more fortunate ones, know perfectly well that an excellent safeguard against excess is to drink with our food ; there is always danger in the nip between meals, especially if there be an hereditary taint or chronic illness which predisposes a person to free indulgence. Also experience proves that the gentler influences of life—the presence of the woman and the child—act as a check against temptation. All this is common knowledge. How then has the State utilised it for the benefit of its less fortunate members ?

It has wilfully and deliberately ignored it. It has done its best to strip every vestige of self-respect from the publican and the public-house ; the gentler elements of home are expelled from the poor man's house of refreshment (rightly in many instances as the conditions are to-day), but nothing has been done to improve the house within. It is frequently ill-ventilated ; it is carefully screened from public view both within and without, as though the mere act of drinking a glass of beer was in itself disgraceful ; it abounds in

corners where the toper may sit unobserved and tope away his last penny.

Epicurus speaks most strongly against partitions in public-houses. He has talked with all sorts of frequenters of these places, men who have declared themselves old topers, and whose features have testified to the truth of their confession. They all admit it is secrecy, security against prying eyes, which encourages toping in its early stages, before the sense of shame has been deadened. Many a fellow, they tell you, takes to drink because for one reason or another the narrow home has been shut against him, owing, maybe, to the birth of a child, or illness, or other natural cause. The pub is the easiest place for him to go to. He forms the habit of attendance, and as long as he sits with a glass in front of him, he is welcome. He talks and smokes, both thirsty jobs ; the glass has often to be refilled. Should he drink more than is good for him, his self-respect does not suffer, for he is safe against observation.

Because it is impossible to make a man sober by Act of Parliament, there is no reason why Parliament should not encourage a man

to keep sober. That is possible and practical. The public-house can be reformed by the gospel of the clean table-cloth. It is possible to quote instances where it has actually been done in London, and where fortunes have been made in the process. And in eating-houses, which appeal directly to working-men, more brightness, more cleanliness, more comfort have been introduced, and as a direct result better business has ensued. But there not even a glass of beer is obtainable.

There is no reason why the public-house, as we know it, should not be encouraged by the State to convert itself into the restaurant as we know it. To use the word 'café' in this connection is to give a wrong suggestion; it raises the vision of a place with little tables in the open air which, from a commercial point of view, is impossible in England on account of the climate. But restaurants are possible.

Parliament ought to differentiate plainly between public-house and restaurant; that is to say, between the place which derives its profits almost solely from the sale of alcohol, and the place in which the sale of

alcohol forms only a small percentage of the business. The tax on restaurants should be light; preferably it should be collected on the actual liquor purchased; every reasonable facility should be given to them to improve and extend their business. Women and children should be welcome there.

As for the public-house which elects to remain a drinking-den, let it be taxed as at present, but abolish by statute all partitions, all class distinctions, and insist on one well-ventilated hall, as big as the house allows.

Think of the cheerless lives in our big cities for whom the public-house affords practically the only bright touch of colour. It is a wonder that drunkenness is not far worse. Epicurus declares there is hardly a healthy mind in these vast areas of dull brick and plaster which is not suffering to-day from what he calls crimsoncholia—a continuous ache for colour.

When the Church Pageant was held in the grounds of Fulham Palace a few years ago we watched, as the centuries progressed, colour fade from the nation's raiment until Drab was master of all. It sounds ridiculous

to argue there is any special virtue in a man putting on a tomato-red coat with sky-blue trouserings on occasions of gladness; but, obversely, when we are in grief, that is exactly what we do. Mourning, we dress in black; rejoicing, we are half ashamed to wear even grey.

That Church Pageant closed each evening with a great torchlight procession. As the streams of light flooded the Palace grounds, the plaudits of the spectators swelled in volume. 'How beautiful!' 'How magnificent!' they cried. But what was beautiful? what magnificent? Yellow light—only yellow light, but floods of it. Afterwards driving home we perceived that at night-time in this drab age the hankering after yellow light is general. Only all are not able to watch a pageant in a palace park; whereas few, if they so wish, are debarred from attending a gin-palace which offers—with other things—floods of yellow light.

Is it for nothing that the blush of dawn rests every springtime on the orchard? Is it for nothing that the scarlet poppies flare on the hill slopes, and the gorse flings its wild

gold over the commons, and the moorlands are cloaked in purple? Is it for nothing that autumn lights a flaming pyre among the beechwoods, and bare winter girdles herself with jewels of crimson berries? For generations we have dwelt among these joyous sights, and the love and desire of their brightness are in the marrow of our bones. Once we thought it no shame to clothe our bodies as gaily as our garden-plots and hedgerows are attired by the hand of Nature.

Then we discerned sin in colour. They who wore bright colours led very undisciplined lives. Wherefore it seemed logical that gay garments should stand for vice, and a black robe cover a clean heart. Sin was as scarlet : virtue, to be virtue, must be sombre. So colour was crushed out of our churches, out of our amusements, out of our lives, but they could not crush the desire for it out of our breasts. Dullness masqueraded as Dignity, and when we raised a mighty monument to a national hero we placed it on the finest site in Europe, and took care it should be the dullest, dismalest spot imaginable. Until Trafalgar Square is made a garden, we can

never boast that the dominion of the devil-god Drab is broken in England.

Many assaults against his cursed power have been carried successfully during the last generation or two. We may behold them in certain sections of the Church of England ; they are patent in the parks, and easily recognisable on the stage. Intellectuals who have gardens of their own, and can afford lots of colour in their homes, sneer at musical comedy. If its many inanities were ten times worse, it would still draw crowded houses, for the populace flock to it in order to soothe their crimsoncholy, to ease that intolerable ache for colour. Many a good play has proved a failure because this truism is forgotten. Modern drama must be set in gardens or in sunlit rooms adorned with flowers. The restaurant habit also has its root in this cause. Rejoicing, we want to be bright, and a well-lit hall with plenty of colour and movement supplies the gaiety of mind that in old times we had to force through immoderate use of alcohol.

It was in accordance with man's usual wrong-headed way of improving the world

that some two or three centuries ago the Army was granted a monopoly of colour, seeing that a campaign in the field, to say nothing of the actual fighting, is dirty work. Our common sense has at last realised this fact, and we are beginning to dress our fighting men rationally for the business of war. Pity it is we dare not go a step further, and, shaking off the rusty shackles of Geneva, clothe once again our working men rightly for the business of joy. The Styrian peasant, whose frame needs a stimulant he is unable to procure, chews mud; British folk, who long for the stimulant of brightness that has been denied them, devour worse than mud.

For the sight of brilliant colour does most undoubtedly strengthen and recreate. I do not know how the mechanism works. But in summer weather escape from the drab city, the hueless round, the dreary task, to a garden where the eye revels in a torrent of colour that bursts from a herbaceous border, and a deep refreshment comes to the mind. The brain is comforted and soothed, just as the muscles of the body are refreshed when a man, after toiling for miles along a hot and

dusty high-road, throws off his clothes and plunges into a cool river pool.

Let your home be in London, and the home-coming from the country must always be sad. Saddest of all is the entrance into this mother city of the Empire through those avenues of mean streets and squalid houses which border every railroad. It is pathetic to see how man, amid the most hopeless surroundings, will cling to the skirts of his mother, Nature. Strips of sooty gardens and window-boxes cultivated in dreary slums bear testimony to an undying craving for the country. Now and again this cruel aspect of the city is driven home in a poignant manner.

Epicurus felt it so one summer. He had been staying in a country-house with children, and had left for London on a Sunday evening. The grey twilight was weaving earth to heaven, and knitting the crests of the Downs to the steep of the sky as he drove to the station. The train ran past commons and spinnies, where caverns of gentle gloom were forming, caverns in which, as every country child knows, fairies congregate, wait-

ing for the first blast of the silver trumpet of the moon to come forth for their midnight revels. In a little while a summer night would end the summer day—a night not of pitch-black gloom but luminous with glints of higher worlds, and its stillness broken by the soft sighing of the trees. In a little while the peace of God would rest upon the tired earth. But not for all, not for him that night. Before darkness fell the glare of London had destroyed it.

The train halted for awhile above a street in Battersea, a mean street, but well lighted. It was late on Sunday, the last lamp had been extinguished in church and chapel, and the public-house for the next hour or two had no competitor. Groups of children sat on the curb and shouted at the train; ragged, stockingless urchins raced along the gutter and tried each to outscreech the other in his joy. Joy! Heaven bless the word, but it is the only one that can be fitly used to describe those unrestrained infantile emotions, excited by raucous noise and flaring lights when they should have been soothed by the calm and restfulness of gathering shadows.

Poor mites ! They have been made at the font children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. Are the city slums the outer courts of that Kingdom, and the square miles of brick, mortar, and asphalt which encompass them the motherland God gave them to be strong in ?

Every year more and more homes are being found nearer the country for city workers. This is good. Nature is man's strongest, wisest, cleanest, and kindest teacher. Not only the slum child, but all who have been born and brought up away from the country, are regarded by Epicurus as motherless children of God. Think of what they have lost in their lives. Imagine England's great writers having been forced to draw all their similes from the city, none from the country !

Back to the country, back to the mother God gave man. Even if it is only for a little while, a man becomes strengthened and refreshed, and is able to balance more sanely the harsher crudities of life.





TWO IMPRESSIONS

THE first visit to Oxford, that ancient city older than the oldest stone upon its ruined walls, yet young as the green fronds that adorn them delectably every spring, must always be impressive, but deeply so if it happens in middle age. A disadvantage of advancing years is that so few first impressions are left to a man, but to balance it there is the more intense, whole-hearted pleasure that these rare experiences inspire as age increases.

I had a vague idea of a day in Oxford during childhood, for the name always evoked the memory of a broad avenue leading to a river where house-boats were moored; but the vision was so faint and fluttering that it might have been a stray recollection of a previous life, until I walked across Christ Church meadow, and knew that my brain had

not played me false. Why, when I must have seen so much on that distant day, this one scene should have lingered ghost-like in my mind is unaccountable. The incident, however, served to link the years together; but everything during that visit seemed to conspire towards the same end.

The cab that took me to Paddington drove past the church where I was christened; as the train steamed out of London I could have thrown a biscuit over the wall that was once the garden wall of the house in which I was born. In the first view of the city I recognised Tom Tower, from pictures at home, for my father was at Christ Church. A Northamptonshire man, my early years were passed within ten miles of Higham Ferrers, the native town of Archbishop Chichele; and before I had been in Oxford two hours I was enjoying the hospitality of Chichele's College of All Souls. This curious weaving of the past and present happens to hundreds in a varying degree on their first visit, for Oxford is a great shuttle throwing the thread of a man's life across the web of many generations.

This thought is most insistent when standing in the hall of Christ Church, and that procession of great men, four centuries long, in feature and vesture as they lived, passes before one's eyes. King, soldier, statesman, administrator, ecclesiastic—they all had felt the influence of Oxford. They had their faults, their failings, and their vices, but also they must have had some quality which distinguished them among their fellows. Did Oxford set a particular seal upon these men's characters during their most plastic years? Did they take away with them a virtue which they could hardly have gained elsewhere? No doubt it was imagination, but I thought the same soul looked forth from the eyes of all.

Those canvases constitute a marvellous memorial of human success. What would one not give for a compendium of the peculiar characteristics of each member of that illustrious throng; for an authentic record of the manner in which each had overcome his difficulties and had passed safely through the crises of life? Possessing those facts, it might be possible to draw up a manual of

character, a classical handbook to guide each generation in the right training of the one that follows after.

But Oxford to-day seems to have no more certain knowledge of human nature than it possessed centuries ago. You find dons and tutors as perplexed as ever how to exert their influence to the best purpose over youth around them. No man of middle age can walk beneath the gateway of New College that leads on to the shady lawns by the old city wall without a smile at the excellent worldly wisdom of William of Wykeham's homely maxim, 'Manners makyth man,' graven on the stone above his head. And he smiles because there occurs to him, out of his own personal experience, at least half a score instances where the mere lack of manners has unmade man. Does Oxford of the twentieth century teach manners in the fullest significance of the word more thoroughly and profoundly than did Oxford of the fourteenth century? Yet England needs men as William of Wykeham would have moulded them more to-day than then.

"Son of man, can these bones live?"

And I answered: "O Lord God, Thou knowest." "

These words, in Latin, were inscribed beneath an old print of the city of Oxford that hung in Cardinal Newman's rooms; a similar print bearing the same inscription caught my eye just as I was leaving the rooms of a Roman Catholic friend to go to Even-song in Magdalen Chapel. By an impressive coincidence, I heard that question asked again in those very words within the hour—read out by a scholar of Magdalen in the First Lesson of the day.

'Can these bones live?' This doubt disturbs the breast of many earnest men, for whom the passage bears no deep religious significance, as they contemplate the future of Oxford.

The words fell on my ears with a strange echo, in a moment of strong emotion. Who can hear for the first time the singing in Magdalen Chapel without being stirred to the depths? Never has music issued from human throat so free from human passion and pagan sensuousness. The perfect training of the choir, the singular purity of those wonderful

trebles, the simplicity of the music itself, combine to uplift a man very near to heaven. They intoned the General Confession, and as the notes rose and were lost among the dim rafters, the pure beauty of that clear volume of sound enshrined, as it were, the devout sincerity of earnest supplication.

Magdalen Chapel is lighted with wax candles, each a little separate flame among the shadows, and through the golden gloom from above the altar there looks down upon the congregation the Man of Sorrows, bearing His cross—Ribalta's painting. That afternoon, when the brief October day had drawn in, I had been taken beneath an electric lamp in the middle of an Oxford street. The lamp was ugly and modern, but the light was of many candle-power. It lit up one side of Balliol. Just beneath it, as so often happens with electric lamps, the shadow was dense, still I could discern four stones sunk in the roadway in the form of a rude cross. They mark the spot where on another October day many years ago two Englishmen had lit a candle. The glow of the death-fires of Latimer and Ridley must also have lit up

that side of Balliol. Has that glow vanished ? Shall Edison's arc-lamp quench the light of Latimer's candle ? The dark places of the earth are still many. And Oxford must keep burning brightly the old warming flame of religious faith and conviction as well as the cold white light of modern science.

The previous night had been a stormy one ; three times I had awakened and heard above the howling of the wind and the pelting of the rain the chimes of Oxford marking the hour. There was the laggard melody of Carfax, the silver notes of St. Mary's, other carillons I could not distinguish, and the deep vibrating tones of Great Tom. Half asleep, I had dreamed my room at the Mitre was in an old fort on the Coromandel coast, where I had once dwelt many years before, and had often listened on stormy nights to the bugle calls and the steady tread and challenge of the sentry. Those bells of Oxford, I dreamed, were her sentinels challenging Time as he goes on his way through the darkness.

' Halt ! ' they cry ; ' who goes there ? '

And Time answers : ' A friend.'

‘Pass, friend ; all ’s well !’

So Time passes on.

Is it not as true of human institutions as it is of ourselves that Time is a staunch ally, if we will but regard him as a friend and make a friend of him, but a relentless enemy when we persist in living at enmity with him ?

Autumn is a beautiful season of the year for a first visit to Oxford. The valley of the Thames is rich in autumn colouring. Crimson are the creepers above St. Mary’s porch, on Magdalen Tower, and the Chapel of Trinity. One could well believe it was always autumn in many of those quiet quadrangles.

The valley of the Thames is fruitful ; its fields have borne many harvests, but where the last was reaped there is grey stubble. The plough has to drive furrows through the stubble to make ready the field for the new seed. Oxford has yielded rich harvests of great men. Is her fruitfulness waning ? Those of her sons who toil on the distant slopes of the Empire never believe it. Cecil Rhodes did not. Their faith in her future harvests cannot waver. But there is grey

stubble in Oxford; there are autumn fields waiting to be made ready for the new seed.



A special glory of the Thames in its winding progress through London is its long reaches and sudden curves. Stand at the middle of Lambeth Bridge on a sunny afternoon and look seaward. Behold not a river, but a long stretch of ornamental water—on one bank the Royal Palace of Westminster, on the other St. Thomas's Hospital, the two joined by the lazy arches of Westminster Bridge. The vista ends (and so, it seems, does that ornamental water) at the foot of Somerset House, whose splendid façade, with its lofty columns, whiter than marble in the sunshine, is a worthy ending of such a view.

In much the same fashion Greenwich Hospital bestrides the river, and as the steamer approaches the waterway assumes the appearance of a lake which one can easily imagine extends no farther than the base of Greenwich Hill.

Let it be high tide at Greenwich about 8.0 P.M., and you may dine at the historic

Ship Inn with as glorious a sight before your eyes as any man with seafaring blood in his veins could desire. The river is radiant with the pageantry of the sunset, its beauty and mystery heightened by clouds and mists and drifts of smoke. Up and down the tideway the ocean steamers move slowly, like awkward cautious behemoths—these home again, those again on their wanderings.

Thousands go to the Tate Gallery and gaze at Turner's masterpieces—which is well. But it were better were these paintings to be as sacred clay to their eyes, so that they should be opened and behold the glorious pictures which are ever set forth in the sky and on the river that flows before them as they pass out of the doors at Millbank.

The voyage back from Greenwich in the grey twilight of a summer evening—twilight which yields reluctantly to the gross darkness of night—is an episode to be stored in the treasure-house of the mind. One needs no guide-book to tell what lies on either bank—the spot where pirates were chained to muddy stakes to be drowned by the rising tide; the names of ancient spires and towers; which

is Billingsgate, or where the Pool? These things are to be scrutinised in the day-time, for they belong to the day; but at twilight day is finished, night has not come: Time is no more, Death lingers. It is a moment of Eternity when the immortal in mortality exults and has vigorous being.

A thousand years are but as yesterday. The street lamps that now shine out give no brighter glow than did the torches of skin-clad hunters or the camp fires of Roman legions flaming on the same spot. The leagues of city will perish as did the forest, and earth be clothed again with verdure, but the river changes not. Those mighty buildings, in daylight so symbolical of enduring strength, appear in the twilight less stable than the fluent wave. Thickly cluster the shadows by London Bridge; they are the eternal part of it; they were thrown upon the waters by other bridges before this one was built; they will lie there on summer evenings when London Bridge, broken down and forsaken, crumbles to decay. Man only tastes the supreme joy of life when, standing undismayed at 'the conflux of two Eternities,'

he gazes on the vastness of the heritage bequeathed to him, and strives to perceive how he may multiply and improve his God-given possession for the greater pleasure and service of those that come after.

The Tower confronts the Thames, ghostly and menacing at fall of night. It is hard to believe its terror is a thing of the past. The river swirls against its wicked old walls in black eddies, but they are black now only with the hue of night, not with life-blood cruelly shed. Think of the shades that gather on those battlements in this pale light, and uncover the head. They were brave men and women in their day; if naughty, no naughtier than you and I; if noble, pray to heaven that we be as noble. Perhaps your own kith of former generations have met death on Tower Hill in the noon-tide of life, their crime loyalty misplaced, or principle upheld against power. In this twilight hour would you deem them unwise? Which the greater traitor—he who betrays his manhood or his king? Happy the nation when King and Manhood stand for the same ideals.

This old house of agony stands as a remembrance of heartless punishment and injustice, though its chambers are no longer wet with tears and blood. So let it stand until the last Little Ease in this bloated congeries of cities — be it sweating-den or slum-cellar — is tenantless as the old stinking dungeons within its walls.

The river between London Bridge and Blackfriars is gloomy. Above you Wren's Dome lifts earth's horizon a little nearer to the sky, but the wharfs on either bank are dark and cheerless, and seem to hasten on the night. Then farewell the day !

In these unheroic years, why should a man fret himself about morrows which shall not dawn for him ? Better to make himself as comfortable as possible, avoid toil and suffering as far as may be, and find pleasure where and while he can. The vision is never granted of the harvest which the preachers declare shall surely some day be garnered if a man sweats at the work which lies to his hand, honestly, loyally, and to the utmost of his abilities. Is that true ?

See that boat crossing among the shadows

of Blackfriars railway bridge, in the stern a man in fancy dress—ruffles and wide-brimmed hat. Watch it when it enters a little pool of light made by an arc-lamp. The man looks up, and now you see plainly his face—pointed beard, sad eyes, happy smile.

Who is he ?

Ask the noble Elizabethans—the shades of Essex, Raleigh, Perrott, or any of those others that may still linger about the deck. They knew him in his life.

‘A play-actor, a play-writer, at times about the court, respectful, knowing his place,’ they will reply. ‘In love with one of the queen’s maids, and she fools him to the top of his bent. Has a wife, they say, somewhere down in the country, and a family; and has lost his only boy. That’s why he instils boredom melancholy in his plays. But he daren’t overdo it; the groundlings won’t stand it, and he has a merry wit and an eye to gain.’

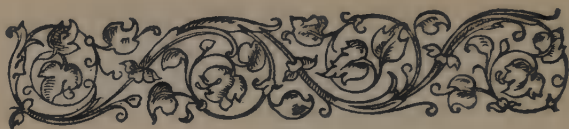
Now ask those disdainful shades whose name shall last the longer—his or theirs. The hand proudly seeks the sword-hilt as they answer :—

‘ We make England ; we use him to amuse us.’

The waters of nigh three hundred years have ebbed and flowed by Southwark’s bank since that man in the flesh was ferried across the tideway, and do you yourself say who, of all that resplendent Tudor court, did more to make England than the play-writer, Will Shakespeare ?

But to be Shakespeare, you retort, a man must have his genius. Yet Shakespeare in his day was not the crowned king of men whom we know. Behind his genius lay the power of throwing his full life-force into his work, which is a power every child of Adam can develop. Our names shall not be inscribed upon the world’s narrow scroll of fame, but if we work as Shakespeare worked, if we throw our full life-force into our tasks, no matter how humble and mean they may appear in men’s eyes, then most surely they shall not be missing from the Book of Life, and England shall be the richer for our brief day.





THE MAJESTY OF DEATH

A WIND blew in from the sea. It came over turbulent waters through the black spaces of the night : it was lost in the gloom of the hills beyond the moorland. As it wandered among the battlements of an old castle—handiwork of man—it made a song, a song of wailing and of sobbing, a song that in its very strength sounded a note of victory, a song that died away in sighing. Every gust repeated the melody. They within the castle listened, and each read to himself, as his heart echoed, the message that the storm-wind sang.

It was the memorial service for Charles, King of Portugal, and Louis Philippe, Crown Prince of Portugal, held in St. Paul's Cathedral on 8th February 1908, when this thought came to me. The choir, unaccompanied by the organ, after the manner of the Greek

Church, was singing that Russian dirge known as the Kieff melody. Those monks of the ancient capital of Little Russia must have learnt their music, so simple yet so full of mystery, from the wind blowing from the forests and corn-fields, and going whither no man knoweth. It rose and fell above the vast congregation of mourners as the wind rises and falls, sadly yet not without triumph, and the words from the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom were intertwined with it : ‘ All we go down to the dust : And weeping o’er the grave we make our song : Alleluia ! Alleluia ! Alleluia ! ’

St. Paul’s is the cathedral church of the British Empire. Twice before I had been present at historical services ; on one occasion it was the consecration of a new Metropolitan of India, on the other they were laying to rest a great administrator whose life-work had been accomplished in New Zealand. On this, the third occasion, expression was given to the Christian sympathy of the British Empire with a Christian nation. The form of service was brief and direct, the music strikingly simple and familiar. The Lord Mayor and

sheriffs of London alone had put on official robes ; King Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra were present, but His Majesty wore the quiet mourning of an English gentleman, and the queen was in unrelieved black, but without a heavy veil. There was neither glitter nor pomp, and there was no undue accentuation of grief. The day was dull, but with gleams of sunshine. No living soul could have taken part in that service without learning anew the full meaning of the phrase—the majesty of death.

When the Kieff melody had died away, the drums rolled, and the band of the 52nd Oxfordshire Light Infantry, accompanied by the organ, played the 'Dead March in Saul.' Handel's music is peculiarly the soldier's death march. To realise fully this truth, you should have lain sick of a fever on a hospital bed within earshot of the European cemetery during a sickly season in an Eastern military cantonment. As the sun is sinking low, and a breath of coolness for the first time tempers the furnace of the day, a roll of drums from the distant barracks reaches your ears, followed quickly by the well-

known opening bars. The disordered brain keeps time to the march as the band approaches; when silence ensues it grows impatient until the farewell volleys are fired and a jaunty air strikes up, telling that the funeral party is on its way home to barracks. It is the same programme most evenings in the week. When the band does not play, the sick man grows restless, and imagines the music waits for him. The 'Dead March in Saul' thus becomes fixed in the memory as a part of the soldier's life.

The drums roll low through St. Paul's. Charles, King of Portugal and the Algarves, Colonel-in-Chief of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, is dead. The drums roll loud through St. Paul's. It is the boom of the guns of Vimiera; men of the 52nd die for the freedom of Portugal. The drums roll low through St. Paul's and cease. In the silence you stand by the lonely grave of another colonel of the 52nd Light Infantry that was dug on the ramparts of Corunna. The full volume of Handel's majestic music fills St. Paul's: it floods the nave and transepts, and surges from the high altar to the west door; it

rises to the lofty roof of the dome, and falls back in a mighty echo. Surely it must pass beyond the veil; it must reach the underworld, and once again the men of the old Light Infantry regiments trained by Sir John Moore are falling in behind their band. Vimiera was fought on 12th August 1808; Sir John Moore fell at Corunna on 16th January 1809; Charles, King of Portugal, died at Lisbon on 1st February 1908, just a week before that service. A hundred years, according to man's reckoning, intervene between those episodes in the story of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, yet on that day they are as one. Beneath the majesty of Death time shrivels to nothing. One week! One century! There is no difference now they are common fractions of eternity.

Science sets forth that man is composed of terrestrial particles; he consists of atoms of matter collected from food and air, and arranged in a certain complicated and characteristic form. And as man is composed, similarly are the oak, the tortoise, the raven, the saurian. To these creatures length of

years denied to man is granted ; but he alone of all created beings possesses the mysterious power that is able to annihilate time so far as the past is concerned. Man garners the centuries in his brain-cells, and feasts on the fruits of a thousand years during the brief span of his mortal life. No wonder he refuses to accept finality merely because death drops the curtain.

It is good to stand for an hour beneath the majesty of Death ; for it is an aspect which affords a better perspective of life.

‘ Give me riches, O Life ! ’ cries one : riches are given, honour departs.

‘ Give me honour, O Life ! ’ cries another : honour is granted, loved ones die.

‘ Give me fame ! ’ cries a third : fame is bestowed, friendship withers. And so it goes on. However good a gift may be, it is too costly if man may only enjoy it by himself.

‘ But it is the same with everything in life,’ says the cynic, ‘ so let us seize what we can and make the most of it as long as we can, “ for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out.” ’

text

Mothers and fathers, look into your own lives and say if this be wholly true. Did your children bring nothing into this world—neither joy, nor nobler purpose, nor a new brightness of life ?

And is it certain we shall carry nothing out ? Are love, reverence, sympathy, of no account, with which, though we may take them with us to the underworld, we will not be burdened, having no use for them outside the flesh ?

Spring came in with a rush that year. There had been the usual promise of early blossom and leaf ; birds had built their nests here and there, and in sheltered spots winter-withered Earth had adorned herself with snowdrops and aconite, anemones and prim-roses white and gold, the colours of poor Louis Seize, as though, like that unhappy king, she thought each faint gleam of sunshine meant settled fair weather, and a few hours of soft breezes heralded the certain end of cruel discontent.

Then a wind blew from the north, a merciless, destroying blast, chilling blood and sap, and the snowflakes danced along the ground.

Flowers drooped and died, leaf and bud were smitten black, the brooding bird crouched close to the nest, lucky if it escaped frozen death. So for several days the Arctic fury raged, and the gentle sun of April was prisoned behind sleet-clouds, grey, impenetrable.

These invasions of winter into spring are hard to bear, more especially if a man be an invalid or convalescent, counting each hour until he be permitted to stand once again beneath the open sky, and, with nothing between him and high heaven, thank God for the joy of living. But at last the fury ended, and the world was flooded with warmth and sunshine. Human eyes could almost discern Mother Earth in the very act of putting on her raiment of verdure against the heat of summer, so quickly did arrested growth proceed. The bursting of buds was no longer an imperceptible process. And what a busy gossiping crowd were the dwellers in the tree-tops.

It was about Easter-time when Epicurus and I met—he regaining strength after a severe illness. We walked in a garden over-

looking the English Channel, and screened from the north and east winds by a brown bastion of the Downs. The April sky was so cloudless and blue, and the midday sun so hot that we would fancy ourselves on an Indian upland, and search the horizon for wheeling kites or an eagle on steady wing, but could see only seagulls and rooks.

The flood of young life flowed strongly around us. One day we detected a new note in the conversations of a neighbouring rookery, and, looking through glasses, beheld two parent birds sitting on the side of their nest and discussing volubly something within it. No doubt it was the arrival of the first fledgling—naked and unclean, disgusting to eye and touch, mostly beak and squawk. But, with the silly pride of parents, they were probably proud of it.

Perhaps they themselves were only birds of the previous year, and did they realise what was to issue from the blotched eggs, or was the new arrival a startling surprise? Anyhow, they were proud of it. Silly birds! Yet not so silly, for if there be one moment of existence vividly real, it is the birth-hour

of a new individual life, those few minutes of victory in the perpetual warfare crowded with defeat which animate Nature wages against Time. A new champion has been created to carry on the old fight. Shall not the creators rejoice, whether they be rooks, careless if their first-born end an inglorious youth beneath pie-crust, or survive for decades to lead the clanging rookery home, or whether they be men and women, with all eternity to look forward to ?

Epicurus spoke of his illness as though it had been a long journey—a journey to the underworld from which he was slowly returning.

‘Did Virgil and Dante pass through an illness such as mine,’ he asked, ‘which carried them to the place of departed spirits they so vividly described ? I can well believe it. I have been with the dead ; they have treated me as one of themselves, crowding round me, and not troubling to hide their least pang from my gaze. I sat on the bank of the Styx in a grey twilight which no sun ever brightens, and to which no midnight ever brings relief, and the dead in

their multitudes passed by me unceasingly, without haste, without rest. Many of them looked down upon me; sometimes their countenances were sad, sometimes they were smiling, but there was no heart behind the sadness, and in the smile no mirth. Their garments were of many colours, but every colour was cold; blue and scarlet, crimson and gold, pigeon-greys, mauves and baby pinks. I could tell each from the other, although all warmth had faded from the dyes. These dead folk were of every height; now they towered far above my head, now they dwindled to a few inches of stature. This seemed right; the unreality lay in the arbitrary standards of the world we had left behind.

‘There was one little group of pallid pigmies caught in the clutch of some cruel circumstance; I could see them struggling in impotent agony; I could not hear, but I knew they were screaming in their torment. They might have been souls from a massacred village. Only when the fever left me did I realise they were but a bunch of snowdrops tied rather tightly together in a vase on the

mantelpiece opposite my bed. I know all I tell you were the fevered fancies of delirium, but they were real to me, and ever will be real, far more so than that ship out there.'

And Epicurus pointed to the sea, where a small yacht with white sails set shone in the sun between two banks of fog. As we watched it, it was lost in the mist.

'It's gone,' he said, 'but you know it's there, and that we could see it plainly were the fog to roll away. How do I know that, going so near to death, I did not catch a true glimpse of what is hidden in the mists that encompass mortality?'

'Presently I seemed, as it were, to slip from the bank into the dry waters of that shadowy river, and far away behind me I could see the hills whence I had come, their peaks bright as at sunset; but around me was grey water, cold, but oh! so peaceful. I closed my eyes and sank gently. Rising again to the surface, I heard the question put to me whether I would toil back up those steep hills which were life, or float down that quiet river which was death. I shall ever firmly believe that in that

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moment of supreme weakness I had it in my power to live or to die. And I chose life and all its weariness.'

The prayer of Simeon to be permitted to depart in peace rises to heaven hourly. Peace in death is the last glory of life, and they who, full of years and honour, fall asleep so gently and easily that even love itself is deceived, enter into their rest by the gate Beautiful.

Let the last outgoing from the old home be by moonlight, not to the dull clamour of a single death-bell, but to the murmuring of muffled chimes, that fall on the silent night as though the consecrated metal feared to disturb the calm of that sad hour. The bier follows the path so often trodden, and the noble cedar of Lebanon and the great elms stand up in the silver light and guard its passing, until from the shadow of the home it enters the shadow of the church, and the tower, the old grey warden of God's acre, speaks a benediction on the latest to enter that domain of peace.

Here on the morrow earth returns to earth, dust sleeps with dust. Presently, if winter

be drawing to its close, there will arise the busy murmur of bees as they gather honey from the flowers, sweet emblems of affection, placed upon the grave. There is new warmth in the air; new strength in the sun. The stark trees now put on purple, symbol of mourning and sign of life renewed, and the songs of the birds, that make a threnody for the sorrower, are earth's ancient epithalamium.

It is the old, old story Nature is ever whispering, and which the Christian faith has made the essence of its belief—that there is no death, but that the passing which man calls death is in truth the beginning of new life.





ALL SOULS' DAY

I WRITE this on All Souls' Day. Every Roman Catholic cemetery is to-day bright with flowers. This antique custom probably persists by reason of its singular appropriateness. There is in a flower stronger suggestion of beautiful life than in anything else in Nature.

On this anniversary a few years ago I stood in the cemetery at Rheims before the memorial to Abbé Miroy, the young French ecclesiastic who was executed by the Prussians during the armistice that preceded peace. The memorial is a marble figure of the priest, lying prone with outstretched arms, just as he might have fallen after the volley. On that morning some one had placed a golden chrysanthemum within one hand, and the simple flower gave a soul to the marble—it was no longer stone, but

the torn, throbbing body of a devoted patriot.

Another memory—this is a day of memories—that this festival brings home is a vision of the day of resurrection. I had before me a tramp of five-and-twenty miles, so the November sun had hardly risen and grey mists still draped the Downs when I walked out of Ootacamund, that Southern Indian town on the Nilgiri Hills, eight thousand feet up. The homely smell of peat-smoke, which curled up from the bungalows on the slopes below me, mingled with the aromatic odours of the pine and eucalyptus trees that shaded the roads. Blackbirds disturbed among the leaves chuckled their warning note as I passed. There was a touch of frost in the air, and the clear atmosphere and brilliant sunlight seemed a very fountain of life, in which a man washed away every thought, every trace of weariness and decay.

The mists slowly drew from the folds of hills, and across a wide valley flashed a glistening sight that for the moment held me spell-bound. On a distant hillside, covering an acre or so, was a sparkle of gems

more brilliant than diamonds. It was the Roman Catholic cemetery on All Souls' Day. Wreaths, many of stamped tin, or, when of natural flowers, under glass shades, had been placed on the graves; the moisture of the misty morning hung upon marble, stone, and glass, and the sun struck full on all, so that dewdrops, tin, glass, and marble sparkled with a myriad rays. It was no fanciful thought that made me for a moment behold that little colony of the dead rising from their graves clothed in celestial raiment of dazzling whiteness.

Let there be death in the house, and you will find it hard to distinguish between Oriental fatalism and Christian resignation. When I first made the acquaintance of Epicurus in India, I was in charge of some works where low-caste Hindu labour was largely employed. A native engineer, with a Scot's devotion to machinery, was a particular friend of mine. He had married about a year before—not, of course, for the first time—and I had been specially honoured with an invitation to the wedding. It was a quaint and pretty ceremony. Then he

brought the news that a son had been born, and a few weeks later mentioned sadly the child was ill.

On the second or third day of my friend's visit, on entering the works in the early morning, I found my engineer absent. His child, they told me, was dead. Having finished the morning's work, I invited Epicurus to walk with me across the sunny rice-fields, mostly grey stubble at that season, to the engineer's cottage. It stood in its own little orchard of tropical trees not far from a backwater where crocodiles, or mudmen as they call them there, bask on the shoals in the heat of the day. A few steps led up to the orchard, and as we entered it we heard among the trees the ring of a mattock against the gritty soil.

'They are digging the child's grave,' I told Epicurus, for those Hindus bury their dead in their gardens.

A young woman was sitting in the grey-blue charcoal-washed verandah; her attitude of abject grief told us who she was. Through a doorway we caught sight of a small shrouded form laid on a mat. The father came to

meet us, and would have us look on his son.

‘A fine boy! a beautiful boy!’ was all he could repeat.

I spoke a word of condolence to the mother as we passed out, and the sound of a strange voice brought her to herself. Flinging her hair backward from her face, and dashing the tears savagely from her eyes, she rose, and with the knell of the grave-digger’s steel against the gravel ringing out clearly, she answered defiantly as she walked into the house :—

‘God has given, God has taken away; who am I that I should weep?’

I translated her speech to Epicurus. ‘She said that—actually those words?’ he asked. I assured him it was a literal translation.

After a silence he observed more to himself than to me: ‘And three months ago I heard almost the same words as they carried the coffin of one I loved into the church.’

I happened the other day to ask Epicurus if he remembered the scene. ‘Remember it!’ he ejaculated. ‘One never forgets those

rare incidents which alter the whole current of one's thoughts on vital questions. That episode and that awful story R. told us at his pretty bungalow in the Indian hills purged my mind once and for all of the morbid sentimentality with which it is too often the fashion to surround death-bed scenes; and, at the same time, deepened my sympathy with all who try to make the last exit easier both for him who goes and for them who stay behind.'

This is the 'awful story' my friend alluded to. Loneliness and malaria have driven many a good man to drink among the plantations of India. Mac went under this way. His nearest neighbour, 'Bluidy Jimmy'—this coarse nickname exactly described the fellow—lived five miles off. The only other European at this time in the district was R., for it was the hot weather, when most planters were away; but he had to stop on to build a bungalow. Mac was pretty well rotten with drink.

About two one morning R. was awakened to read this note from Jimmy: 'For God's sake, send us some sawn timber, Mac's

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sinking; we must get him underground directly he 's dead.'

The planks were sent.

In the morning R. rode over to Mac's bungalow. There was nothing to be done except console. It was a heart-breaking task. The poor fellow had cut himself off from his people; he did not know whether his parents were alive, or where any one lived except a sister, whose letters he had not answered for years, and he craved for home. R. did his best to comfort him; at his request he read a passage or two from an old Bible reeking of whisky. Mac's head ached terribly, and all the time there was hammering in the verandah outside.

'Why don't you stop that hammering?' asked R.

'Can't,' was the reply.

'I'll soon do it for you.'

'You mustn't,' cried the dying man. 'Don't you know what they are doing? They are making my coffin. Bluidy Jimmy says it must be finished before I croak, because I won't keep.'

Mac was buried next morning at sunrise.

Yet another memory.

The sun sinks over the Red Sea, and the hills of Arabia rise up in the golden light. For close on a week we had battled across the Indian Ocean in the teeth of the south-west monsoon, but at last there is calm. We had spent the forenoon lazily watching flying-fishes skim over the wave-crests, and talking under our breath; now we stand, a small congregation, in the waist of the ship, listening to the Burial Service.

They had put a man on board at Bombay, white, oh ! so ashen white, there could not have been a whole red corpuscle in his veins. Malaria. The voyage home was a forlorn hope, but he is never again to go west of Suez.

The ship slows down to half-speed; the throbbing of the engine grows weaker and weaker. They stop. Life seems to leave the silent ship, for is not the labouring screw its pulsing heart? The familiar words fall with a strange cadence in that unfamiliar scene. The ship pauses, swaying gently to the waves. There is a slither, a faint splash, and it is finished. The soul rests in eternity,

and all that is mortal in the bosom of the eternal sea.

When the King-Emperor rode through Delhi, the ways were lined with men of the army which guards and protects India. But if the sea could have lent its dead for an hour, summoned to review by the drum-beat of the royal yacht's revolving screw, from Spithead to Malabar Point his Majesty might have sailed down a sea-path lined on either side by men of the grand army that has won India. And many a beardless chin, many a face in the very prime of youth, would have appeared in that long parade.

These old memories set me thinking of a talk I had with Epicurus when we were together in Cornwall two or three summers ago. We were strolling along the cliffs. Nature nowhere paints this dingy planet more gloriously than she does that toe of England in August.

'Look there,' said Epicurus, pointing with his pipe stem to a patch of crimson heather, 'there you see the secret of Tyrian dye. It was to imitate the colouring of this uttermost end of the world that the old Phœnicians

squeezed the purple from their molluscs. Imperial purple, as one knows, was a dull sort of crimson. And that crimson tint was first used in the dye-vats of Tyre, so that the wealthy venturers of Phœnicia might clothe their women-folk in gay linen garments that recalled to them the summer beauty of these old headlands.'

After luncheon we sat beneath a cliff watching the mighty wave of the Atlantic, *splendidior vitro*, hurl itself against the ramparts of Britain. A mass of rock, loosened by the tides, tumbled with a crash into the sea.

'Did you see that!' exclaimed Epicurus. 'Tell me through how many million molecules has the impulse passed and gathered force which gave the final death-blow to that bulk of granite?'

Before I could frame an answer, he replied: 'Through as many millions as the million individual lives which have given to you and me the power to sit here in the sunshine and absorb the glory and majesty of life through our bodies and minds. Of all the vast mysteries that encompass this speck

of consciousness I call my Self, the one that fascinates me the most is why man, a paltry beast in himself, mean compared with many other animals, should have been singled out to rise to this proud pre-eminence and to receive the immortal gift which enables him to enjoy an ever-growing heritage of achievement on achievement stretching back to the lost beginnings of time.'

'Surely whither we go is the more fascinating mystery?' I queried.

Epicurus would not have it so. 'To begin with,' he declared, 'death is a hopelessly egotistical subject; you cannot discuss it outside yourself. A man on his way to luncheon sees a stranger run over in the street and killed, or apparently killed, and he cannot eat. Next day he is told of a disaster in which thousands of lives have perished in some distant part of the world, and it does not even stay the fork to the mouth. Why? Because, in one case, the possibility of his own death is suggested; in the other, the suggestion is absent.

'Now all faiths agree at least in this, that if there be life beyond the grave it is within

the limits of the universe. Grasp the meaning of that. Regard the restless sea and the ever-changing vesture of the land ; lay your head upon the earth and dream of the stupendous forces at work beneath its surface ; glance at the sky, and, curtaining the sun, watch the planets in their course, and the shine of stars and the flashing of meteors through that black abyss—everywhere energy, irresistible, unresting ; nowhere rest. It is the same to a less degree in our own lives, but, alas ! human energy is ever checked and broken by the human frame. Is it not pathetic to read in biographies and obituaries how this man or that was deemed fortunate by his fellows because in his lifetime he could do with a few minutes' less sleep, or was able to work for a few hours longer at a stretch ?

‘ Death certainly rids a man of his material body, and if conscious life continues, his energy, freed from this load, must enter a realm of vigour which the mind can only faintly comprehend. Were immortality a scientific certainty, the earth would be depopled in a century, for if by walking, as it

were, from one room to another, a man could leave behind him the mean and transient in his nature, and intensify the durable and noble a thousandfold, what power on earth or in heaven would prevent him from doing it ?

‘ But Nature does not work so. If death be in truth a gate to higher life, it is strictly in accordance with her plan that it should be guarded not by a flaming sword, but by a keen blade of icy coldness to drive back mercilessly all who attempt to penetrate the mystery, whether in idle curiosity or in a delirium of grief. The instant reason assures me there is nothing beyond death, in that instant is born within me a belief that there is something, and that my reason is but playing the part ordained by Nature. Experience amply testifies that to be enamoured of death is unhealthy, so why worry the mind with a mystery which obviously in the cause of life cannot be unveiled ?

‘ But it strengthens a man to think out whence he came, and by what devious paths his fathers have travelled even since the comparatively recent years when they raised

those stones over there.' And Epicurus pointed to the purple moorland that swelled to the horizon behind us. 'We are ignorant of the master minds who thought out the religion those "dancing maidens" and "blind fiddlers" represent, and of the men who quarried them, nor do we rightly know who carved on their face the emblems of Christianity; but there they stand like the great stone Joshua set up in Shechem, witnesses unto us lest we deny our God.

'The time that has elapsed since the first parent of us all, the protoplasm, gasped its little life away in a puddle is so immeasurably vast that it may well be likened to eternity. Far though man has come since that hour, and steep the peaks that he has climbed, as long a journey lies ahead of him, and loftier heights has he to scale before he enters even that fair vale of delight where he may dwell secure at least against those evils which he himself has the power to destroy. What lies beyond the valley, who shall say?

'We are slowly awakening to a knowledge of our unnecessary defects and weaknesses, and with the knowledge comes the desire to

eradicate them. Occupy your soul with these things, so shall you find peace at the last, for philosophy has yet to teach me a higher concept of the soul than is contained in that rather ribald song which you and I and all of us have so often shouted in our glee :—

- “ John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on.” ’





SANCTIFICATION OF GOLD

Riches

NOVEMBER is the most mystical month of the twelve—the one that touches most closely the human heart. She comes to England draped in grey, weeping over the dead flowers of summer, moaning among the leafless woods. Can these fleshless bones live? is the burden of her lamentation, and of herself she shows the answer. Her tears herald a resurrection, and new life already is manifest where the fallen leaves lie thickly. The thrush sings the song of spring on the cold bough.

The glory of the earth is not for November; she seeks her beauty in the skies. A pink flush warms the chill dawns; the gloomy evenings glow crimson red; and when for a few minutes in the day the scanty sunshine gleams through masses of black clouds down the drenched streets, it turns the dull city into 'a city of pure gold like unto clear glass.'

‘And those half-score words from The Revelation, which I am glad you quote rightly,’ observed Epicurus, ‘are, in my opinion, at the root of that curious anomaly, so perplexing equally to Christian and pagan, which has made wealth a virtue in the Western world. “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,” sounds ludicrous in our ears. Preachers in Christian pulpits try to explain away the plain sense by many ingenious interpretations. But its literal meaning is accepted as a verity in the East, and the great renunciation is still to-day taken when a man forsakes all that he has in order to follow the path which his soul warns him is the only one that leads to eternal peace.

‘In the fourth century there was an important school of divines who would have excluded the Apocalypse from the Canonical Writings. Had this been done, try to realise what Christianity would have lost and gained. “The picture of a heavenly city set solid in gold and precious stones, spacious in design, and glorious in detail, has always seemed to

men the most fitting symbol of that perfect life that will follow earth's failures." These are not my words ; they appeared the other day in the leading article of a great London journal, and they are certainly true in so far that they describe accurately the picture which has stood for heaven in the thoughts and aspirations of a multitude of good men.

' Yet it is obvious the new heaven of the Evangelist's vision was not of solid gold, not of the metal which gave Nero his power, and which that maniac lavished on his mummers and panders ; but it was of the pure gold that gives gladness to the sunrise and the sunset, and shines in the sunbeams that knit earth to heaven, and glitters in the dragging curtain of an April shower—the pure gold of the radiance that, beneath the burning Judæan sun or in the vivid whiteness of the moonlight, glistened from the golden roof and pinnacles of the Temple to which the writer's thoughts must have turned with the unutterable longing of exile.

' But Western man did not take it in this sense. He built for himself in the Hereafter a solid twenty-four carat mansion, of which

none should rob him save himself alone, convinced that only within such costly walls could there be a home where there is neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain. Believing this most truly, and being of an honest heart, he deemed it wicked to be jealous of those who here on earth enjoyed all that he himself desired. So gradually it sank deep into the mind that gold was of the nature of heaven, and its actual possession a divine blessing, and the lack of it, if not a punishment for sin, at least a trial to test the goodness of mortal nature. Sooner or later a reaction against this strange unreality was bound to set in.'

I pointed out that alongside this curious exaltation of riches there had been fostered an unnatural contempt for them. We find persons who have been taught in childhood that while it is right to do things, it is wrong to do them for money, and that the acceptance of pecuniary reward detracts from the value of the service rendered, and puts the person who receives it under a sense of social inferiority. Shrewd men with commercial minds have not been slow to exploit these mistaken

ideas, with the result that those who allow their business life to be governed by them find they have to render heavier service for the same wage than others who rightly regard that the balance hangs true between the wage-giver and the service-giver.

A worse evil of this wrong teaching is that it engenders a habit of thought that, while it is wrong to work openly for money, there is no disgrace in gaining it under the cloak of a dozen different disguises, of which gambling is the commonest.

‘Every class,’ said Epicurus, ‘has its peculiar idioms of thought and conduct, and more particularly is this true where money is concerned. Those who probably take the most level-headed view of it are the very men we are apt to decry—I mean those whose main business in life is occupied with the getting of it. Though they often exaggerate the material importance of gold, they understand what the possession, and also what the lack of it, really implies in ordinary life; they are generous donors to public institutions, and privately distribute largesse with keen discrimination and a very simple

kindness, so that of their gifts it is true that "money does not smell."

'As regards child-training, you must remember that too often children are not rightly taught social perspective. Their eyes are kept constantly turned towards the ranks above them, as if there, and there alone, happiness lies. They come gradually to regard those who, for one reason or another, occupy a lower station as almost belonging to another world, a nether world where no good thing flourishes. Nothing could be further from the truth. Children, to be wisely educated, should be brought into contact with those beneath them quite as much as with those of their own or of higher station; otherwise the poor souls acquire the habit of only measuring their lives against lives which externally appear more fortunate. No wonder their own lot seems stunted, and they grow up obsessed with the desire to gain at all hazards the means to raise themselves to regions which they regard as the higher tablelands of joy.'

We discussed the peculiar importance attached to wealth as we strolled through the

Park on a blustering November afternoon, with many evidences around us of extreme poverty and excessive opulence. Nor could we agree which was the more soul-killing.

Genius will not infrequently arise from the lowest depths of misery, though rarely is it nursed on the lap of Dives. Yet to preach to-day the advantage of even comparative poverty is to qualify a man for a lunatic asylum. Turn where you will, every pleasure and happiness which we have been taught to regard of any account is a merchantable commodity, and until a man possesses the coin necessary to satisfy not only his wants but his desires, righteous or unrighteous, how can he deem himself fortunate? One would feel more assured on this point if a sincere millionaire were to testify solemnly on his death-bed that the joys which had made his life really worth living had been the ready-money ones.

Money can buy so much, and it bulks so big that it calls for an effort of will to escape from its influence. And a man drifts easily into that curious habit of thought that multiplies present happiness by future gold,

and finds the product amazingly immense. Thus, he who is happy on £500 a year imagines he will be doubly happy on £1000 ; let his income but reach £5000, and he dreams of a flood of pleasure that will be his ; but let it go forward to £50,000, and there shall not be a chink or crevice in his life which he will not bung up against every cold blast. It is only when an individual has experienced how quickly he reaches the last limit of riches that he understands what a futile creature the genus homo is, and how small is its power even over its own body and mind.

The ability to acquire wealth is a much commoner gift than the capacity to expend it, so that the possessor touches the widest possible extent of existence. Most rarely do these two gifts go together. The Rothschild family is perhaps the most notable example of this fine combination ; it seems to have made a thorough study of the art of spending money, so that now when the wealth of the Rothschilds is alluded to, one thinks less of their actual gold than of all the good things which the wise use of it has brought to them and to their race.

Afterwards we fell to talking about the struggle between Capital and Labour, between the Haves and the Have-nots, between Collectivism and Individualism, label it as you will. To us it seemed but a phase of that old, old war between the superman (by that we meant the man whom chance has set above his fellows) and the multitude which began with civilisation, and may possibly end at the dawn of the Millennium.

These words were recalled which I wrote : ' Socialism and selfism are the two strong pinions upon which humanity shall soar heavenwards. They must beat the air with equal force, for cripple the one never so slightly, and the other is unable to fulfil its true work. They are opposing energies ; if they do not act in unison, they must counteract each other.' Substitute collectivism and individualism for socialism and selfism, and surely this is the ideal state towards which mankind is blindly struggling.

Individualism has had a good innings in these islands for the last two or three generations. One shudders to think how the miseries that existed in mine and factory

fifty years ago, and which found expression in contemporary writings like Mrs. Browning's 'Cry of the Children,' will be stigmatised centuries hence. Will they be compared to the persecutions of pagan Rome? To-day there is so much that is unsatisfactory in our social conditions which we flinch from facing, that it is a feeble consolation to know we shall not be forced to listen to the judgment of posterity. Individualism for the last twenty years has been yielding slowly to collectivism, until now the tide of battle has turned, and the former stands upon the defensive. Would we had good grounds for the hope that the old errors and blunders of the dominant power for the time being are not to be repeated under different shapes. So far it appears to be taken for granted that the only tribute the individual shall be compelled to yield to the community is money; every man must give of his cash, but it shall be optional how much of his leisure and strength he shall surrender to the common good.

The tide of collectivism, we argued, would flow for a generation or two, and then again individualism would assert itself, and so

the old struggle would go on. But so long as there is struggle, there is vigorous life.

It is a truism that to be happy is to be good, but it is also a truism that not one man in ten acts on this principle in ordinary life. We are well aware that nine-tenths of the wickedness of big cities has its origin in poverty and the misery that arises out of it, yet how rarely do we find concerted action to remove degrading and unnatural conditions of life which are the cause of evil by common-sense methods. Not a little of our social reform legislation seems to be nothing more than a bribe to the wretched to be content with their wretchedness.

But individually much is being done. Many are the appeals made to the more fortunate to add to others' store of happiness, and to endeavour to make joy to blossom where it has not bloomed before. Socialism is one of those unfortunate words on which a restricted meaning has been forced, but every effort to help forward the quest of happiness is socialism in its truest sense.

Hospitals, convalescent homes, fresh air funds, homes for the dying, work for the

crippled, garden cities, rational public-houses, Church lads' brigades, children's happy evenings—these, and a hundred other similar enterprises, are true socialism. Why is there no cohesion between them? The country needs joy unions as much as trade unions, and plans of campaign against misery far more than political campaigns.

Considering the immensity of the work that is being accomplished by these separate and unorganised units, it is obvious that with organisation this good would be increased a hundredfold. England is sorely in need of an organiser of happiness, a man possessed of a genius for overcoming obstacles and allaying suspicions and jealousies, who will martial these numberless bands of fighters who are always skirmishing on the outskirts of poverty and joylessness, and attacking misery now from this point, now from that. Then would the battle against distress and degradation move forward on a broad front, and in the sight of all men; and victory, which appears so hopeless as things are now, would at last emerge from the present chaos of desperation.

The wind had dropped; the day was quickly dying. A thin pearl-grey mist gathered under the trees, veiling the distances and giving the suggestion that the shades of men and women from dead centuries were walking down the glades. There came through the thickening gloom that pleasant music in a countryman's ears—the cry of the flying mallard, and the call and chatter of birds making ready for the winter night. Lamps were lit here and there.

‘Except a drunken woman, there is nothing which offends me more than night in a big city,’ exclaimed Epicurus. ‘The darkness is defiled by man's illuminants (heaven forgive the word!), and the stern solemnity of the midnight profaned with tawdry glitter. The sanctification of gold is not the only false idea of which we have to rid the mind; there is the diabolism of darkness. Has man not yet reached an age when he dares to wean himself from that terror of night which haunted his daylight-feeding anthropoid ancestors? Think of all the lovely spots on earth which we have tamely surrendered to that old poacher, the devil,

merely because they are marked by solemn gloom. The powers of darkness in truth work for good more than for evil in the present state of civilisation, so why should we go on speaking and writing as though it were otherwise? We talk of lightening the darkness when we are really blinding our eyes. When I was young, I could walk along rough paths at night without stumbling, and find my way anywhere. But now, after living so long in places whence clean darkness has been banished, if you set me in a four-acre field on a black midnight I doubt if I should find my way out before morning.

‘I once asked a man in India, who had lived there for ten years without a break, his idea of a most complete holiday, and he promptly answered: “To winter somewhere in the Arctic regions, where I should not see the sun for at least three months.”

‘I have the same feeling that to find perfect rest one should dwell for some months every year in regions where night is only lit by the lamps of heaven.’





MERRY CHRISTMAS

WERE the earth twisted round, winter replaced by summer, and long nights by long days, would Christmas remain in vogue? The feast in the Antipodes is, of course, only a pale imitation of ours. This question must often suggest itself at Christmas-time to men and women tramping the gloomy streets through a sodden atmosphere, while on either hand shops smile warmly and beckon them to enter and spend their money freely, each one well knowing that over every extravagance the broad cloak of Christmas charity and goodwill can be thrown. Contrast plays such a big part in the world's affairs that one cannot help suspecting it of having a hand in maintaining old customs.

‘And how does colour affect the brain?’ asked Epicurus; ‘that is another question to inquire into on grey winter days. Un-

doubtedly it is an excitant, especially red ; and it is not purely accidental that Father Christmas is clad in scarlet and not sky-blue, or that the holly berry plays so big a part in the decorations of sombre December.'

The burden of Christmas lies heavy on my shoulders in the middle days of December, as it does on all who have children in their own or other households to consider. Epicurus is a bachelor ; therefore a higher authority on the young of the human species than any misguided mother or father. Childhood, he declares, is a Medea's cauldron. Let a man cut up in small pieces his senile fads and worn-out prejudices, and set them to simmer over the nursery or schoolroom fire, and there shall come forth to him a new spirit—the spirit of his almost forgotten youth. But he must not forget to add the right herbs—gracious, sweet-smelling herbs, which can be cultivated in the least garden—nor to utter the secret spell—every sympathetic heart has learnt it—otherwise he may find himself in the soup, like poor old Pelias, with his children the death of him.

There is doubtless truth in this, but you

do not want to have it dinned in your ear at the very season when the mildest-mannered parent, aunt, or uncle is tempted to curse roundly the mad Caligula, who added a children's day to the Roman Saturnalia, and became primarily responsible for the custom of giving presents at Christmas. And besides the presents, think of all the amusements which have to be planned—parties, dances, pantomimes, theatres, etc.

‘It does an elderly gentleman all the good in the world to be hauled out of the ruts, just once in the year,’ my friend remarked brutally. ‘It is your duty to provide a full programme of amusements for your children; to carry it through without a breakdown means that they must of their own accord create a reserve of energy. It is excellent training; they learn the price of pleasure, and are taught in a practical manner that the success of happiness, like every other success in the world, is dependent on restraint and discipline.’

Epicurus, you should have married the old woman who lived in the shoe. What a busy, happy life you would have led!

‘Now let me take up my parable,’ he answered, ‘and say—the greedy boy is son and heir of the idiot father. Poor child, for generations he has been abused and spanked and howled at for his greediness, while all the time his fault was only a symptom, the actual moral malady being the idiocy of his parents. Many must remember when to allow children sugar in their tea or with their puddings was considered wanton luxury or a very special treat. Yet all the time their little systems, growing rapidly, cried out for saccharine nutriment, especially in cold weather. Was it any wonder when, on one day in the year, they were turned loose on sweet-stuffs, presented to them in the most indigestible forms, they over-ate themselves horribly?’

‘Would you call that man a beast who, being actually starving, was given nothing to eat but a Strasburg pie, and was sick on it? Or would you hold up as an awful illustration of the sin of intemperance a sailor shipwrecked on a thirsty island, where no water is, who, at his last gasp, finding a hogshead of whisky, made himself disgrace-

fully drunk ? Of course not. Yet that is the way the greedy boy has come by his reputation.

‘ I find myself blushing for the stupidity of my fellow-men when I hear a parent refuse a small child some little delicacy with the phrase, “ You mustn’t be greedy.” There is nothing greedy about it ; the child is only healthily curious, and nine times out of ten his curiosity might be harmlessly gratified were it not for some silly preconceived idea. If you want to develop greediness in children, forbid them everything outside their ordinary dietary. You will invest the simplest luxuries with all the sweetness of forbidden fruit, and when they get half a chance to let themselves go, they will, with a vengeance. On the other hand, don’t refuse children anything except for reasons intelligible to them, and they soon come to discover there is no humiliation in not being given the same food as grown-ups ; also that it has no special excellence, and they do not desire it. But never lose a good opportunity of allowing them, if they ask for it, to take a mouthful of something that to their palate

is uncommonly nasty. Five minutes' spit and splutter is a lasting corrective for inordinate curiosity.

‘ You spoke of Caligula starting the fashion of giving presents to children at Christmas by adding his *dies juvenalis* to the Saturnalia ; I suppose you were right. The servants' ball has always seemed to me to be distinctly traceable to the same source, and to be a relic of the Roman occupation. There is something un-English in the idea of making a festal day an occasion for emphasising class distinctions—for defining the gulf between the sheep and the goats, and then ostentatiously bridging it for an hour or two. But if, when her Grace gives her hand to the steward, and the Duke leads out the house-keeper, they are only doing what the Roman patricians did in the days of the Republic at this very time of the year, when slaves sat at table with their masters and talked to them on terms of equality, then you can understand it. I have read that the village pound is probably the most ancient English institution ; if I am right, the servants' ball is centuries older.’

Wherever it is possible there should be merriment on Christmas Day, but it is terrible how, year after year, just at that very season, events compel us to recognise that sorrow and pain have an equal reign with comfort and happiness; indeed, one is forced to question whether their dominion is not the wider. Unless one bar and shutter the house against human sympathy—and who would dare to do that?—these facts must temper the warmest, jolliest atmosphere. Nevertheless, Christmas Day is a day to be seized and made the most of.

‘And as we go down the years,’ added Epicurus, ‘memory may render us cheerful as well as sorrowful service, even though the former in comparison appears a little trivial. Now, a Christmas dinner which always amused me was your leg of mutton.’

As a matter of fact, there was nothing amusing about the mutton, but about the reason whereby at the last moment it came to be substituted for a turkey. In certain towns in India droves of turkeys come round at the beginning of the cold weather, and English residents then purchase their

Christmas dinner, and relegate it to the poultry-yard to be fattened. I followed the usual custom, and selected a fine young bubbly-jock. My choice was wise in every respect save one : I had no idea of the bird's extraordinarily friendly disposition.

In a little while my Christmas dinner had constituted itself my inseparable companion. It would wait outside the bungalow for my coming out, walk at my heels like a dog round the garden, making wise remarks to itself in an undertone, and, watching me indoors, give a friendly gobble of farewell before it returned to the poultry-yard. I swore no sickly sentimentality should save its life. It was by no wish of mine that the bird played Damon to my Pythias. I could not then get another turkey for love or money, and Epicurus was to be our guest. But when the fatal day came, my heart misgave me ; so the family dined off a leg of mutton, and the bubbling blue-bird gobbled Christmas greetings at us from the doorstep.

When we are in London at Christmas-time, we always go on the Sunday afternoons to

the Foundling Hospital to hear carols sung by the children. Epicurus joins us there. His favourite carol is a modern one :—

‘ Long long ago in Beth’lem City
The Christ Child came,
With no one but His Mother sweet
To warm His little hands and feet,
And know His Name.’

‘ Is it not hard,’ he will say, ‘ to realise the hour when Christianity lay a babe on the breast of a peasant girl—a baby happy in the love that in that very stable the goat was showing to its kid, the she-ass to its foal ? The mother, herself happy, radiant with the same natural joy, and pain of body and ache of heart over, worshipping in the new life her life’s redeemer—the Redeemer of the world.

‘ Religion is all the stronger for this festival of the new-born babe—this mild compulsion that urges us to tarry every year for a moment at the threshold of Infinity. We are nothing but a pack of children, crawling on the floor of this small nursery of a world, some trying to climb up and see out of the windows, but only tumbling back,

bruised and hurt; others squabbling and quarrelling over broken toys, or crying they know not what for. Here are those over-tired and wailing to go to sleep; there others weep because they are forced to go, though they want to play a little longer. The new-born babe is the elder brother of us all, so much wiser than we. So let us honour him.

‘Perhaps, too, he knows the secret of happiness. Some children once asked me to write them a guide to the Magical Land; this was the best I could do.’



Once upon a time there lay hidden in a wilderness a tiny hamlet, sheltered by green palms, bright with flowers, and cheerful with the music of running waters. Men who had seen it called this lovely spot the home of happiness, and wandering into far lands would tell of its pleasures, or make pictures of its pleasancess. Children, when they heard the beautiful stories and saw the beautiful paintings, would start of a morning to find this magical hamlet under the palms—boys and girls together in holiday attire.

They came quickly to a garden full of gay blossoms of every kind of colour and of delicious odours. They raced over the smooth lawns, picking flowers here and there, freely, with none to say them nay. Tired, they rested on mossy banks, their hands filled with nosegays, and for sceptres they would wave a lily or an iris, and they wove themselves coronals of pink carnations, and plaited stoles of milk-white roses.

‘Very soon we will come to that pleasure,’ they shouted one to another, ‘which we will make our home for ever.’

Beyond the garden was a grove where the birds sang blithely.

‘Let us hurry on,’ the children said, ‘for it must be in that grove of singing-birds.’

At the edge of the garden an old blackthorn stood forlornly. It seemed as if spring had forgotten it, for never a green leaf showed on its tangled branches, and its gnarled trunk and twisted boughs looked cruel and forbidding. A dove caught in the topmost branches struggled among the thorns.

‘Let me go free, let me go free,’ the bird moaned. And its silver feathers fluttered

sadly through the black boughs down to the ground.

'Poor thing!' cried the girls as they saw the bird.

'Cannot you rescue it?' they asked their brothers.

The boys would begin to climb the tree, but the branches tore their clothes, and the thorns cut deeply into their flesh.

'We cannot wait,' called out the girls; 'our wreaths are withering. Be quick, or we must leave you.'

The boys exclaimed: 'It doesn't really matter; it's only a bird. There are lots of birds in the grove. The thorn-bush is not easy to climb. Why should we tear our clothes and hurt our hands just for a dove?'

So the children went on together, talking among themselves: 'We must not waste our time, or we shall never reach that joyland before nightfall.' But the dove struggled painfully in the thorn-bush.

Two paused by the tree: 'Poor thing!' sighed the girl as the others had sighed; 'cannot you rescue it?' The boy began to

climb. He cried out as the others had cried when the thorns cut into his flesh.

‘Be brave, brother,’ the girl called to him. Then she looked down, and saw that the bright flowers in her hands were fading. ‘I must be brave too,’ she whispered to herself.

The boy fought his way to the topmost branches. It was a hard and long fight, and the fragrance had gone from the blossoms, and the crown of carnations on the girl’s head was dead. But she never faltered. Still smiling, she called out : ‘Be brave, brother, be brave.’

‘Let me go free, let me go free,’ moaned the dove.

The boy broke away the thorns that fettered the bird, and straightway it flew far away out of sight. He made his way to the ground with what speed he could, but ruefully, for he was in pain ; his clothes were torn, and he had thought that the dove would have hovered above his head at least for a moment, and bestowed on him a benison.

‘Grieve not, brother,’ said the girl, ‘it was only a bird. You have been brave.

Could we see pain and pass it by when we had the strength to help? How can we reach a home of happiness if we leave unhappiness in our path?'

The girl tore the bright broi'dery neatly from her robe, so that the rent might not be perceived, in order to bind the boy's torn hands. She mended his garments skilfully with thorns from the thorn-bush. Other children as they ran by laughed to see their plight. But the boy and the girl heeded them not.

Now, with the others, they entered the grove of singing-birds, and gaily ran up and down the sunlit glades. Some, in pursuit of golden blossoms or of purple petals, rushed recklessly through thickets and into swamps. Sparkling streams ran through the grove. They drank from them whenever they were thirsty, and washed their garments in the clean waters. They looked here and there for the pleasance they sought, but found it not.

'It must be beyond the grove,' they said; 'we shall come to it presently.'

A fountain lay at the base of a black rock.

The girls mirrored their fair faces in its crystal depths, and the boys dipped their hands into its cold waters to cool their heated foreheads.

‘ Let me go free, let me go free,’ bubbled the fountain.

And they all exclaimed : ‘ It were, indeed, a shame that water so clear and cool should be prisoned beneath this black rock.’

A mattock had been thrown on the ground near by. The boys laid hold of it.

‘ What will you give us, dull fountain, if we let you go free to chatter in the sun ? ’

‘ Blisters,’ bubbled the waters.

The girls lifted up the round boulders that checked the outflow, asking : ‘ What will you give us, sad fountain, if we let you go free to laugh beneath the moon ? ’

‘ Bruises,’ bubbled the waters.

‘ Shall we who seek happiness waste our time here gaining blisters and bruises, just to send one more runnel of water through the grove ? ’ Twere folly ! ’ So they went on their way.

But the two who had freed the dove passed near the rock and heard the cry of the

fountain. They asked, as the others had asked, for their reward.

‘Blisters—bruises,’ was the murmured answer.

‘Who fears blisters?’ shouted the boy; ‘but bruises are not fit for girls.’

He seized the mattock and set to work manfully. The girl, saying nothing, quietly lifted the round boulders, but often they slipped through her hands and bruised her sorely. Once she cried out in her pain. He would have left his task to comfort her.

‘Nay, brother, work on,’ she said; ‘we must not waste our time if we would reach the place we seek before nightfall. But our task must first be finished.’

So they toiled bravely together.

Suddenly, and, as it seemed, with a shout of triumph, the fountain leapt from his prison, and went rushing into the grove down the channel they had dug for it. So quickly did the waters go that they left behind them not even the thinnest trickle. His hands were blistered and burned, many were the bruises that marred her tender limbs.

‘It were a shame,’ he shouted, ‘that the

waters did not stay at least until they had quenched our thirst.'

'Nay, brother, it does not matter,' said the girl. 'There are other streams where we may drink. This fountain will slake the thirst of flower and fruit that would have withered and died had we not let its waters free. How can we live in a home of happiness if we do not remember the sorrows of others?'

The grove was left behind. The trees became fewer, and presently ceased. The grassy glades ran into dusty roads which perished in the sand. For the little company now wandered in a wilderness upon which the afternoon sun beat fiercely. There was little shade, and the pools of water were few and brackish. They walked slowly and wearily, for they were footsore.

'Where is that pleasance?' they asked each other. And one would say, pointing to the north: 'It is there. I can see its palms shine on the horizon.' So they trooped to the north. But the palms faded away.

Another said: 'I knew you were wrong; it is to the south. Look, there is the pleasant shade of its orchards.' So to the south they

went, but the orchards vanished from view. It was only the mirage of the desert taunting them in their weariness. They had lost their way.

Two among them walked straight on, saying nothing. They also were tired and footsore, and had to drink from the brackish wells, but they were not deceived by the mirage. Wounds and weariness did not overcome them so that they saw false visions ; for they had learnt the lessons of pain and patience willingly in the garden beneath the thorn-tree, and of their own free-will they had tasted toil and suffering by the fountain in the grove. Wherefore in the wilderness they were strong to endure.

The sun was sinking low when they sat in the shadow of a rock, very footsore, very tired, very thirsty, but not in despair ; for hope always burned brightly in their hearts. Suddenly at their feet a fountain bubbled up. They bent down and drank greedily. Its waters were sweet.

As they drank they heard them murmur : ' Blisters and bruises in the grove ; refreshment in the wilderness. Prisoned beneath

the black rock, there we should have remained ; free, we have wandered hither.'

They rose happily, their thirst quenched, and smiled as they looked in each other's eyes, saying nothing. Now they walked on briskly, their weariness having well-nigh departed. A dove sunning itself in the sand rose before them.

The whirl of its wings whispered : ' Follow me, follow me. Caught among the thorns in the garden I was freed, wherefore I can be a guide in the desert.'

Hand in hand they followed the flight of the dove. Soon the ground fell away, and at their feet lay a hamlet among feathery palms fair to look upon, with orchards through which sweet waters ran merrily, and where birds sang sweetly.

' It is not yet night,' they said laughingly to each other, ' yet we often thought darkness must fall before ever we should find the home of happiness. So it is really here. It is not a mirage. But it's very hard to find.'





Nature

THE MOTHER OF US ALL

‘NATURE endowed me at birth with a boon that I value above all others—a pagan heart,’ said Epicurus.

‘I am a country fellow whose gods dwell upon the surface of the earth, ay, and whose devils live there also; but the evil sprites, when not manifest in human form, are such small things and with a saving sense of humour that I entertain little real terror of them. At twilight the gods talk with me, and they permit me to be of their company when they assemble beneath the stars. Wisdom they have taught unto me, and ever they preach the folly of trusting overmuch to finite knowledge.

‘They have showed me how we mortals are nothing but a fleet of cockle-boats labouring in the middle of a stormy Atlantic. Now we ride the crest of a great wave, and the

spindrift in the clear light catches the colours of the rainbow, and we shout joyously, believing life to be beautiful. But at that very moment the wave glides from beneath us, and we toil miserably in the abysses of a troubled ocean, the sun obscured by the spray that seemed so radiant just before. But the elements are the same: we are in the same boat on the same voyage, whether we ride the wave or labour in the hollow.

‘Nature does not frighten me. I am bone of her bones, flesh of her flesh, and grew into being beneath the beating of her heart. Nor does her vastness overpower me, for am I not a part of her—a mote laughing in the sunbeams, a shadow playing in the moonlight, a wisp of vapour riding on the storm-wind, a grain of sand whose chariot are the great seas ?

‘We humans jeer at her cruelty, but she works for strength, for greater energy, and uses death as the instrument of life. Within her breast there is a divine mercy which is often lacking in our loving-kindness.

‘Man is her favoured child. As a mother beckons her toddling babe to walk his first

steps unaided, though he tumbles, so she is ever calling to him to put forth new powers, even at risk of life and limb. She delights to baffle his endeavours, knowing well that by so doing she forces him of his own free will to wrest her secrets from her. Nature has led man to the throne of heaven, and has taught him that he has part in the Eternal, though what that part may be is a mystery he has yet to unveil.

‘Think of the hour when in a midnight vision on a lonely height man saw for the first time the One True God. Many deities he had known among the cities of men, and had worshipped at their shrines, but one by one they had failed him. And he wandered sore at heart from laughing gardens and vineyards and verdant pasture-lands to the wilderness where herb wrestles with rock and sand, and the tiniest green thing is a symbol of unconquerable life.

‘Whereunto was man born that he should struggle in the arid waste, abominable as the desolation around him? The eagle rejoiced in wider freedom; the camel thrived where he perished. There raged in the heart of the

dreamer rebellion against the gift of life, that unwelcome summons from sleep to toil and suffering. But in the silence of the night, beneath that purple canopy with its glittering silver and pearly grey embroideries, something stirred, and for the first time there was revealed a Divine Intelligence overruling these strivings and strugglings, a Supreme Will that never faltered or weakened, an Eternal Purpose to be made manifest in the day of fulfilment. The craving for knowledge, the desire of beauty, the will to endure—these were of the very essence of the Unattainable that dwelt in the heights. And the thought fired the brain and glowed in the heart that here at last man beheld the True God, a God Almighty and Omnipotent, so that there was no space in heaven or on earth for any other. In that hour the knowledge was born that the soul of man was of the same substance and spirit, created in the image of God.'

'But the old cry against human futility and feebleness still ascends, and not without reason, to heaven,' I remarked. 'Why may we not reach that goal towards which it is

said we are struggling by a quicker, surer way? As we look backwards progress may be measured to some small degree, but it has been infinitely slow. Ponder what it might have been. If in truth we be the children of God, should not the powers of the Eternal be bestowed upon us, and the tardy and painful processes be removed through which man has struggled aimlessly, and it seems needlessly, generation after generation?'

'Nature is the mother of us all,' answered Epicurus; 'we can go no faster than she moves. The secret of her beauty is her perpetual laughter at man's fussy self-importance.'

'How many generations, think you, lie between the crab-apple in the hedge-row and the Blenheim orange pippin in the orchard? I have seen side by side an Indian jungle fowl, a bantam, and an Indian game-fowl, one of the biggest of poultry. Both birds had the same colouring, and other identical characteristics; there was no mistaking their common origin. If the life of a fowl were of the same period as man's, how many centuries must have elapsed before the bigger

bird were evolved from the little one. That only applied to carnal attributes, over which, as we better understand the rules of Nature, we obtain great control.

‘ Our characters are also her work. The thriftiness of the hillman is proverbial. He had for generations to find a livelihood where the means of sustenance were of the scantiest, and was never certain to reap where he sowed. But on the plains, soil is deep and rich, crops heavy, grazing good, water plentiful, and the lowlander did not trouble about food which was always ready at the door. He turned his virtues into other channels, and became the opposite of the hillman—unthrifty. Why not ?

‘ Possibly the avarice of the Hebrew race about which we hear so much had its origin in the desert, where the possession of a skin of water meant the difference between life and death ; later the means to purchase water took the place of the precious fluid itself. If we could only trace back our qualities, good and bad, to their origin, we should find they are most of them the survivals of virtues which Nature compelled us

to practise in our own defence. Only when they outlast their purpose and we cling to them do they become vices, like the vicious appendix.'

'Has war outlasted its purpose?'

Epicurus laughed.

'I wish I could tell you,' he replied. 'But if there be one lesson more than another which life takes pains to teach, it is that man must attend to the precepts of Nature. War endued man with strength, physical, moral, and mental; but it was a horribly wasteful process, and there can surely be no reason why he cannot now of himself acquire equal strength by cultivating in times of peace the same spirit of discipline, self-sacrifice, and service to others which was called forth under the dripping whips of carnage. If we are not yet wise enough to act so, then be certain Nature, sooner or later, will punish us in her old reckless fashion. And if we be too weak to withstand the punishment, we disappear as a nation.'

The business capacity of the Frenchwoman is a notable illustration of how unexpected qualities are developed under stress of cir-

cumstance. The average Englishman, out of his own experience, has come to regard woman as lacking in a capacity for affairs. Then he is confronted by the Frenchwoman, with an innate genius for commercial administration, who can see more clearly than most business men the right line to take in difficult places. May we not find the origin of this feminine business instinct in the fact that for several generations the industry of France was guided by female intelligence, the men being sucked from home, office, and farm into the whirlpool of great wars. The continuance of private enterprise depended on the capacity of the women left at home, and this severe and practical training made them what they are to-day.

It was the evening of a perfect summer day—a day so hot and lazy that ocean herself seemed weary, and the long Atlantic waves broke drowsily on the white sands. We sat on the cliffs and talked together. Night tarried.

‘Thank God for life and for setting mine in this age,’ said Epicurus. ‘However pessimistic be our views of individuals or groups

of individuals, there is no gainsaying that mankind is forging ahead. Never in his long career has he been more active and virile. A consciousness of ignorance has grown upon him which is the beginning of wisdom.

‘The pessimism of the age is largely due to the realisation of the big tasks that lie ahead, and the sense of impotency which this knowledge engenders.

‘Ah! what shall I be at fifty
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?

‘That cry of youth is the prelude to all endeavours to make the world less bitter than it then appears. And presently from the bitterness comes forth sweetness, gold is found among dross, flashes of light shine through the gloom, telling of spheres of brightness somewhere in the distance.

‘Nowadays a man may almost see the world reformed within the compass of his lifetime. You and I have nearly witnessed it. Think of the annihilation of time and space, the so-called conquest of the air, the destruction of the void, the comprehension

we have gained of the infinitely small and its mighty purposes, and of the infinitely great and its minute manifestations. The more disciplined sympathy that now quickens the human spirit—that, too, is a triumph. It seems as if Christianity is just beginning to justify itself. I don't forget the doubtings and disbeliefs. But everywhere old life is springing into new and healthy growth. The hard winter of ignorance dies; the genial spring of wisdom is at hand. There are, of course, many blizzards ahead, and periods when these early blossoms and buds of man's higher nature will be cut down and killed by untimely frost. But the sap is rising; nothing can stop that.

‘To change the simile: it is as though civilisation were standing to-day in the twilight of dawn. As the mists lift and the earth shows forth more plainly, the heavens seem to recede, and the stars fade from sight, so that there comes to the watcher a strong temptation to deny in that moment the reality of the heavens. But he need only wait for the light to grow stronger for them again to become visible.’

‘What of the individual life, Epicurus? Is that turned to a better purpose than in the past? Is human nature more noble, either singly or in the mass?’

‘Twice,’ he answered, ‘I have been permitted to be present at the coronation of a British sovereign. Each time the conviction overcame me that the ceremony was in truth more a prayer than a pageant. Its endurable part lay in the fact that an Englishman and his wife consecrated with high ritual their lives to the service of their country publicly, in the sight of God and man.

‘The noble souls that walk the asphodel meadows must be strangely moved to assemble in the void spaces of the fane where their children and their children’s children congregate, for there be prayers so deep and strong that they echo through the farthest regions, known and unknown, of this vast universe, summoning all, seen and unseen, to attend. Neither the black moat of old Styx nor the golden ramparts of a newer Faith can hold back the great ones who have helped to make our England on the day of the crowning of her king and her king’s

consort. Their spirits throng the Abbey, overshadowing the small finite multitude, throughout those heavy hours of ceremonial which are so symbolical of the toil and self-sacrifice all must be prepared to endure, even in their most glorious moments, who set in the forefront of their lives the traditions of their country and the duties which these traditions demand.

‘ And this high ceremony is to me symbolic of the dedication of life each is capable of making, no matter in what humble career his work may be consecrated. For duty is a crown of gold to be worn with dignity and high purpose, and he who puts it on walks through life a king among his fellows.

‘ Wherever I turn I detect a more sincere endeavour to inspire life with nobler purpose. There is a revolt against the gospel of materialism which judges success solely by the standard of riches, and earnest efforts are made to discover a tableland of joy, not a fanciful El Dorado, which can be made accessible to all men. Glorious will be the day on which that great discovery is

proclaimed ; though you and I shall not see it, I am certain it will dawn.

‘ We once spoke of an ideal day, wondering how a man looking back on his time on earth would describe it. Since then I have tried to picture the ideal day of my own life. I have felt the intense exultation which ambition, realised after a long and weary fight, brings with it ; I have known the joy of crowded hours when a man seems to make the very world move forward as though it were a horse between his knees. Other delights I have enjoyed, and they were good.

‘ Yet when it is all summed up and the balance struck, I go back to such a day as this—hours of sunshine and sea-breezes, with Nature flinging at my feet, as though I were her favourite child, the richest jewels and the most glorious needlework stored within her treasure-house. The fool whom perhaps I do not suffer as gladly as I ought, has not crossed my path ; that worse abomination, the human tadpole, the little thing with a swollen head, has not come near me. I was able this morning to dry a child’s tears and to bring smiles to a face of sadness, and

the chance was given me to lighten the load of one whom the world treats hardly. In other small ways I have been able to help during the day, and to know that I have been of service. But I have done nothing for which I can expect the slightest reward in the future; the bare suggestion of it would annoy me. Now I am tired, and to-night I shall fall into a dreamless sleep, hoping I shall wake in the morning all the better for this happy day.

‘ May not an ideal life be after this manner ? In moments of enthusiasm I feel convinced that the one and only purpose, the whole purpose, of man’s sojourn in the world, is that he shall make it a better place for those who come after him without fretting himself what he is to get out of it when his day is done. This sounds a tame conclusion, but it has a curiously exhilarating effect.

‘ I contrast the wild man of Borneo with the aboriginal of Queensland, the shaggy nudity from the back-blocks with the finished product of Grosvenor Square, and the difference between them seems to lie in the fact that for one it has been not possible, for the

other possible, to build on the work of other men. Human progress lies in the service we render our neighbour. Only we must think first of ourselves, not to excess, or else our work can be of little good.

‘Now it is time to be leaving. Night is here, and I have a journey to go. Life is so good a thing ; let us not waste it. If we are not in a hurry to get through it when we are young, we shall not sigh for youth when we grow old. At first live our own life ; then weave it into the lives of others, so shall the gods love us, and though we attain to four-score years, even then we shall die young.’

‘And afterwards ?’

‘Turn not your back on the eternal truth that death is powerless to end our life in this world, in your longing to unveil the mystery whether after death we live elsewhere. Our names may not continue, but does that signify if the life’s work endures ?’

‘Look out to sea, at that rippling river of silver that streams under the moonlight to the horizon. As one wave lends its force to the other, and the impulse now gathers strength, now loses it, in passing over those

miles of black water, so is the life of one man, of one generation of men on the ocean of humanity. Will not the knowledge that by our acts we can each of us help in the making of the world that is to be suffice to give dignity and glory to this our great adventure?

‘There’s only one more word to be spoken, one of the most beautiful in the English language, for it breathes a prayer which no morbid sentiment can injure—God be with you. Good-bye; this is our last talk together.’

Good-bye, Epicurus! Farewell.



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